

Commentary

By

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On the

Epistle to the Hebrews

VIVES & RSV

PROLOGUE

‘There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours’ (Ps. 86:8).

1. – In these words Christ’s transcendence is described under two aspects: first as compared to other gods, when he says, ‘There is none among the gods like thee, O Lord’; secondly, as reflected in His effects, when he says, ‘nor are there any works like thine’.

2. – In regard to the first it should be noted that although there is but one God by nature, as it says in Deut. 6:4: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord’, nevertheless, by participation there are many gods both in heaven and on earth: ‘For there be gods many, and lords many’ (1 Cor. 8:5). For angels are sometimes called gods: ‘When the sons of God came to stand before the Lord’ (Jb. 1:6 & 11), and also prophets, as is said of Moses: ‘Behold I have appointed you the god of Pharaoh’ (Ex. 7:1), and priests: ‘You shall not speak ill of the gods’, i.e., of the priests (Ex. 22:28); ‘If the thief be not known, the master of the house shall be brought to the gods’ (Ex. 22:8).

Angels are called gods on account of their rich splendor of divine brightness: ‘Upon whom shall not his light arise?’ (Jb. 25:3). But angels are not like unto Christ among the gods, because He is the ‘brightness of the Father’s glory’ (Heb. 1:3); ‘Setting him on his right hand in the heavenly place above all principality and power and above every name named in this world and in the world to come’ (Eph. 1:20). The prophets are called gods, because the word of God was spoken to them; ‘He called them gods, to whom the word of God was spoken’ (Jn. 10:35). Therefore, Christ is God in some more excellent way, because He is the substantial Word of God. Priests are called gods, because they are God’s ministers: ‘You shall be called priests of the Lord, you ministers of our God’ (Is. 61:6). But Christ is God in a stronger sense, for He is not a minister but the Lord of all: ‘Lord of Lords’ (Rev. 19:16). ‘But Christ was faithful in his own house as a son’ (Heb. 3:6). Christ, therefore, is the great God above all the gods, because He is the splendor, the Word, and the Lord.

3. – Secondly, this transcendence is shown by His works; hence it says, nor are there any works like thine. Here it should be noted that the matchless work of Christ is threefold: one extends to every creature, namely, the work of creation: ‘All things were made through Him’ (Jn. 1:3); a second extends to the rational creature, who is enlightened by Christ, namely, the work of enlightenment: ‘He was the true light which enlightens every man that comes into the world’ (Jn. 1:9); the third extends to justification, which pertains only to the saints, who are vivified and sanctified by Him, i.e., by life-giving grace: ‘And the life was the light of men’ (Jn. 1:4). Now, the other gods cannot perform these works: for the angels are not creators, but creatures ‘Who make your angels spirits’ (Ps. 103:4); prophets are enlightened and not

enlighteners: 'He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light' (Jn. 1:8); and priests do not justify: 'It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away' (Heb. 10:4).

4. – The transcendence of Christ is thus clearly shown in our text; and this is the subject matter of this epistle to the Hebrews. By this subject matter this epistle is distinguished from the other epistles: for some of the epistles deal with the grace of the New Testament, so far as it extends to the whole mystical body of the Church. This is the theme of all the epistles he sent to the churches, i.e., to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, up to the first epistle to Timothy. In the others he treats of this grace, insofar as it extends to individual persons, namely, Timothy, Titus, Philemon. But in the epistle to the Hebrews he treats of this grace, inasmuch as it pertains to the head, namely, Christ. For these three things are found in the body of the Church, just as they are found in the natural body, namely, the mystical body itself, its chief members, namely, prelates and rulers, and the head, namely, Christ, from Whom life flows to all the members.

5. – But before we come to the task of dividing this epistle, it should be noted that before the Council of Nicaea, some doubted that this was one of Paul's epistles for two reasons: first, because it does not follow the patters of the other epistles. For there is no salutation and no name of the author. Secondly, it does not have the style of the others; indeed, it is more elegant. Furthermore, no other work of Scripture proceeds in such an orderly manner in the sequence of words and sentences as this one. Hence, they said that it was the work of Luke, the evangelist, or of Barnabas or Pope Clement. For he wrote to the Athenians according to this style. Nevertheless, the old doctors, especially Dionysius and certain others, accept the words of this epistle as being Paul's testimony. Jerome, too, acknowledges it as Paul's epistle.

To the first argument, therefore, one may respond that there are three reasons why Paul did not write his name: first, because he was not the apostle of the Jews but of the Gentiles: 'He who wrought in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, wrought in me also among the Gentiles' (Gal. 2:8); consequently, he made no mention of his apostleship at the beginning of this epistle, because he was unwilling to speak of it except to the Gentiles. Secondly, because his name was odious to the Jews, since he taught that the observance of the Law were no longer to be kept, as is clear from Acts (15:2). Consequently, he concealed his name, lest the salutary doctrine of this epistle go for naught. Thirdly, because he was a Jew: 'They are Hebrews: so am I' (2 Cor. 11:22). And fellow countrymen find it hard to endure greatness in their own: 'A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house' (Mt. 13:57).

To the second argument the answer might be given that the style is more elegant, because even though he knew many languages: 'I speak with all your tongues' (1 Cor. 14:18), he knew the Hebrew language better than the others, for it was his native tongue, the one in which he wrote this epistle. As a result, he could write more ornately in his own idiom than in some other language; hence, he says: 'For though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge' (2 Cor. 11:6). But Luke, who was a skillful writer, translated this ornate Hebrew into Greek.

1-1

Heb 1:1-2

¹In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

6. – He wrote this epistle against the errors of those converts from Judaism who wanted to preserve the legal observances along with the Gospel, as though Christ's grace were not sufficient for salvation. Hence it is divided into two parts: in the first he extols Christ's grandeur to show the superiority of the New Testament over the Old; secondly, he discusses what unites the members to the head, namely, faith (chap. 11).

But he intends to show the New Testament's superiority over the Old by proving Christ's preeminence over the personnel of the Old Testament, namely, the angels, by whom the Law was handed down: 'The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator' (Gal. 3:19); and Moses, by whom or through whom it was given: 'The law was given by Moses' (Jn. 1:17); 'There arose no more a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, to whom the Lord spoke face to face' (Dt. 3:10), and the priesthood by which it was administered: 'Into the first tabernacle the priests indeed entered, accomplishing the offices of sacrifices' (Heb. 9:6). First, therefore, he favors Christ over the angels; secondly, over Moses (chap. 3); thirdly, over the priesthood of the Old Testament (chap. 5). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that the angles lack this greatness; secondly, since this is true of Christ, he shows that the angels lack this greatness (chap. 2).

7. – In regard to the first he indicates Christ's excellence in four matters: first, as to His unique origin, by calling Him the true natural Son of God; secondly, as to the extent of His rule (v. 2c); thirdly, as to the power of His activity (v. 2d); fourthly, as to the sublimity of His glory (v. 2e).

But because he intends to extol Christ so that it redounds to the glory of the New Testament, this favors the New over the Old,

8. – About which he mentions five things: first, how it was promulgated; secondly, the time (v. 1b); thirdly, the author or giver (v. 1c); fourthly, to whom it was given (v. 1d); fifthly, by which ministers (v. 13).

9. – He says, therefore, **In many ways**, referring first of all to various persons, because God spoke not to one person but to many, namely, Abraham, Noah and others; secondly, to the various times and always with the same certitude: 'He went out early in the morning... And about the third hour... And again about the sixth hour...' (Mt. 20:1 ff.). Many also in regard to the matters treated, namely, divine things: 'I am who am' (Ex. 3:14); and future events: 'She knows signs and wonders before they be done' (Wis. 8:8);

and promises of future benefits, at least in figure: 'Many things are show to you above the understanding of men' (Sir. 3:25). Many also in the variety of figures; because at one time he uses the figure of a lion, at another the figure of a stone: 'A stone was cut out of a mountain without hands' (Dan. 2:34); 'That he might show you that his law is manifold' (Jb. 11:6).

And in various ways. This refers to the three kinds of vision: first, ocular vision: 'In the same hour there appeared fingers, as it were the hand of a man writing over against the candlestick upon the surface of the wall' (Dan. 5:5); secondly, imaginary vision: 'I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated' (Is. 6:1); thirdly, intellectual vision, as to David: 'I have had understanding above the ancients' (Ps. 119:100). Hence, Hosea (12:10) includes all of these: 'I have multiplied visions.' It refers also to the various ways He spoke, because sometimes He spoke plainly and sometimes obscurely. In fact, there is not manner of speaking that has not been employed in the writings of the Old Testament: 'Behold, I have described it to you three manner of ways, in thoughts and knowledge' (Pr. 22:20). Thirdly, because He spoke by rebuking the wicked, by enticing the just, and by instructing the ignorant: 'All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice' (2 Tim. 3:16).

10. – Then he touches upon the time, when this teaching was delivered, i.e., the past, because **he spoke of old**, i.e., not suddenly, because the things that were spoken about Christ were so great as to be incredible, unless they had been taught bit by bit as time went on. Hence St. Gregory says: 'As time went on, the knowledge of divine things grew.' 'The former things of old I have declared, and they went forth out of my mouth, and I have made them to be heard' (Is. 48:3).

11. – Thus, he mentions the author, namely, God, Who speaks: 'I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me' (Ps. 84:9) For He does not lie: 'God is not a man that he should lie' (Num. 23:19).

These, then, are the first three things which commend the Old Testament: authorship, because it is from God; secondly, subtlety and sublimity, because in so many and various ways; thirdly, duration, because of old.

12. – Fourthly, he shows to whom it is delivered, namely, **to our fathers**. This is why it is familiar and known to us: 'We declare unto you the promise which was made to our fathers' (Ac. 13:32); 'As he spoke to our fathers' (Lk. 1:55).

13. – Fifthly, he indicates the ministers, because it was delivered not by jesters but **by prophets**: 'Which he had promised before by his prophets' (Rom. 1:2); 'To whom all the prophets give testimony' (Ac. 10:43).

14. – Then (v. 2) he describes the doctrine of the New Testament and mentions five properties. Four of these are differences from those of the Old, and one is the same. For when he had said, **in many and various ways**, he was indicating that every ordered multitude should be referred to one thing. Therefore,

although the manner is manifold, all is ordained to the last thing: ‘Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long’ (Pr. 23:17); ‘The consumption abridged shall overflow with justice. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption and an abridgement in the midst of all the land’ (Is. 10:22). Likewise, of old referred to the time of waiting and of darkness, **but in these last days** refers to our days, i.e., to the time of grace: ‘The night is passed and the day is at hand’ (Rom. 13:12).

15. – It should be noted that in regard to the Old Testament he says, ‘speaking’, but here he says, **has spoken**, in order to designate that the speech of the New Testament is more perfect than that of the Old. To understand this it should be noted that three things are required for our speech: first, the conception of a thought whereby we preconceive in our mind that which is to be spoken by the mouth; secondly, the expression of the conceived thought to enable us to indicate what has been conceived; thirdly, the manifestation of the thing expressed, so that it becomes evident. God, therefore, when speaking, first conceived, so that there was but one conception and that from all eternity: ‘God speaks once’ (Jb. 33:14). This eternal conception is the engendering of the Son of God, concerning Whom it says in Ps. 2 (v. 7): ‘The Lord said to me: you are my Son, this day have I begotten you.’ Secondly, he expressed his concept in three ways: first, in the production of creatures, namely, when the conceived Word, existing as the likeness of the Father, is also the likeness according to which all creatures were made: ‘God said: Be light made. And light was made’ (Gen. 1:3). Secondly, through certain notions; for example, in the minds of the angels, in whom the forms of all things, which were concealed in the Word, were infused, and in the minds of holy men: and this by sensible or intellectual or imaginary revelations. Hence, every such manifestation proceeding from the eternal Word is called a speaking: ‘The word of the Lord which came to him’ (Jer. 1:2). Thirdly, by assuming flesh, concerning which it says in John (1:14): ‘And the Word was made flesh.’ Hence, Augustine says that the Incarnate Word is related to the uncreated Word as the voice’s work is related to the heart’s word.

But the first expression, namely, in creation, is not for the purpose of manifesting. For it is clear that that expression cannot be called a speaking; hence, it is never said that God speaks when making creatures, but that He is known: ‘The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made’ (Rom. 1:20). But the second expression, which is the infusion of forms in the minds of angels or of men, is directed only to the knowledge of divine wisdom; hence, it can be called a speaking. The third expression, namely, the assuming of flesh, took place of the purpose of existing and of knowing, and for expressly manifesting, because by assuming flesh the Word was made man and brought us to a complete knowledge of God: ‘For this was I born, that I should give testimony of the truth’ (Jn. 18:37). And he clearly manifests Himself to us: ‘Afterwards he was seen upon earth, and conversed with men’ (Bar. 3:38). Thus, therefore, although God speaks in the New and the Old Testaments, He speaks more perfectly in the New, because in the Old he speaks in the minds of men, but in the New through the Son’s Incarnation. Furthermore, the Old Testament was handed down to the Fathers looking on from afar and seeing God from a distance; the New has been handed down to us, namely, to the apostles, who have seen Him in His very person: ‘That which we have heard, which we

have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled the Word of life, we declare unto you' (1 Jn. 1:1); 'He made not the covenant with our fathers but with us who are present and living. He spoke to us face to face' (Dt. 5:3). Hence, it is clear that that speaking was a promise: 'To Abraham were the promises made' (Gal. 3:16); but the New was a manifestation: 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (Jn. 1:17). Also, in the Old He spoke in the prophets; in the New in His Son, Who is the Lord of the prophets: 'The only begotten, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him' (Jn. 1:18).

16. – Does this mean that all the ones through whom God spoke were prophets? I answer that five things are required of a true prophet: first, the revealing of things which transcend human knowledge; otherwise, he would not be called a prophet but a sage, as Solomon, whose mind was enlightened in regard to things within the ken of human reason. Hence, not even the Jew called him a prophet but a sage. Secondly, the understanding of the things revealed; otherwise, he would not be a prophet: 'There is need of understanding in a vision' (Dan. 10:1). That is why Nebuchadnezzar, not understanding the revelation made to him, is not called a prophet, but Daniel, who did understand it, was called a prophet. Thirdly, it is required that in the things he sees and by which he is alienated not be held as though by things themselves, but as in figures; otherwise, he would not be a prophet but a lunatic, who apprehends imaginary things as though they were real: 'The prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream: and he that has my word, let him speak my word with truth' (Jer. 23:28). Fourthly, that he perceive the things revealed, with certitude, as though known through demonstration; otherwise, it would be a dream and not a prophecy: 'The Lord God has opened my ear and I do not resist: I have not gone back' (Is. 50:5). The fifth requirement is that he has the will to announce the thing revealed; accordingly, some claim that Daniel is not a prophet, because he does not receive the thing revealed in an expressible way. Hence, it is not said that the word of the Lord was made to Daniel, as it said of the other prophets: 'The word of the Lord is made a reproach to me, and a derision all the day. Then I said: I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name; and there came in my heart as a burning fire' (Jer. 20:8).

17. – But another question arises: Why does he say, **in the prophets**, when he might better have said: 'by the prophets?' The answer is that he did this because he wished to exclude certain errors: first, the error of Porphyry, who claimed that prophets invented their statements and were not inspired by the Holy Spirit. To counter this the Apostle says, he spoke in the prophets. As if to say: They were not speaking of themselves, but God was speaking in them: 'For prophecy came not by the will of men at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pt. 1:21).

Secondly, to exclude the error of those who maintained that prophecy is something natural and can be possessed by one's natural disposition, as a melancholy person might have a very strong imagination; so strong, indeed, that he considers the things he imagines to be real. Hence, it says, he spoke in the prophets. As if to say: Prophecy does not come about through a natural disposition but by an inward utterance of God: 'The Spirit breathes where he will' (Jn. 3:8).

Thirdly, against the error of those who claim that prophecy can be possessed like a habit, as science is possessed, so that whenever a person decides to do so, he can prophesy. But this is not true, because the spirits of prophecy are not always present in the prophet, but only when their minds are enlightened by God; hence, in 2 Kg. (4:27), Elisha says: 'Her soul is in anguish, and the Lord has hid it from me.' Therefore, the Apostle says, in the prophets. As if to say: Not that prophecy is possessed by all or always, as habits are, but only in those in whom it pleases God to speak.

Fourthly, to exclude the error of Priscilla and Montanus, who maintained that prophets do not understand their utterances. But this is not true; hence, it is stated in Hag (1:3): 'The word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet'; and in 1 Cor. (14:32): 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.' That which he says, in the prophets, i.e., in the understanding and power of the prophets. Thus, therefore, is clear Christ's unique property, namely, that He is the natural Son: 'The Father is in me and I in the Father (Jn. 14:10).

18. – But is He one of those sons of whom it is said: 'I have said: you are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High' (Ps. 81:6). No; because these are called sons in a general sense, but He is the Son Who was appointed heir and lord of all things.

Is He one of those sons of whom it is said (Jn. 1:12): 'He gave them the power to become the sons of God, i.e., who believe in his name?' No; those are said to become the sons; but Christ is the Son through whom he made the world. Is he one of those sons who glory 'in the hope of the glory of the sons of God' (Rom. 5:2)? No, because they are sons through the hope they have of God's glory, but He is the splendor of that glory. Others are called sons, because they were made to the image of this Son: 'Whom he foreknew to be made conformable to the image of his Son' (Rom. 8:29), but He is the image itself and the figure of His substance. Others are called sons inasmuch as they contain within themselves the Word of God: 'That you may be blameless and sincere children without reproof in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation: among whom you shine as lights in the world. Holding for the word of life' (Phil. 2:15). But He is the true Son Who carries all things by the word of His power.

Therefore, Christ's supereminence is clear from His unique origin and from His relationship to other sons of God. It is these things which make the New Testament greater than the Old.

19. – Yet in regard to both testaments he says, 'speaking', or 'has spoken', in order to indicate that both have the same author. This is against the Manicheans: 'By him we have access both in the same Spirit to the Father' (Eph. 2:18); 'Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles?' (Rom. 3:29). Again, the Old was given to our fathers, but the New to us, i.e., through his Son, Who is the Lord of the prophets: 'The only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him' (Jn. 1:18).

20. – Then he shows the greatness of Christ's power when he says, **whom he appointed the heir of all things**; for as it says in Gal. (4:7): 'And if a son, an heir also through God.' But in Christ are two natures, namely, the divine and the human: insofar as He is the natural son, He is not appointed heir, (He is so

naturally;) but inasmuch as He is man and has become a son of God: ‘Concerning his Son who was made to him of the seed of David’ (Rom. 1:3). Indeed, as a man, He has been appointed heir of all things, just as He has become a son of God: ‘All power is given to me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18) and it extends to every creature that He has taken under His rule. It extends, therefore, not only to one type of man, but to all, i.e., both Jews and Gentiles: ‘Ask of me and I will give you the Gentiles for your inheritance.’ (Ps. 2:8).

21. – Having shown Christ’s excellence as to His unique origin, he now shows His excellence as to the majesty of His dominion. It is suitable that these two be joined: **He has spoken to us through his Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things**: ‘If a son, then an heir’ (Rom. 8:17). But it should be noted that in Christ are two natures, namely, the divine and the human. But according to the divine nature, since He was not appointed Son, since He is the natural Son from all eternity, so neither was He appointed heir, since He is the natural heir from all eternity. But according to His human nature, just as He was made Son of God: ‘He was descended from David according to the flesh’ (Rom. 1:3), so He was made heir to all things: **Whom he appointed the heir of all things**: ‘This is the heir, come, let us kill him’ (Mt. 21:38). ‘I will again bring an heir to you, inhabitants of Mareshah; the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam’ (Mic. 1:15). Indeed, according to His divine nature it belongs to Christ to be the begotten heir of the Lord. First, because He is the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18) through Whom the Father makes all things. Therefore, if the Father is called the God of all by reason of creation, the Son also, through Whom all things were brought into existence, is called Lord. ‘I was with him forming all things’ (Pr. 8:30). Secondly, because the Son is the Father’s wisdom, by which He governs all things. In Wis. (8:1) it says of wisdom: ‘She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other and she orders all things well.’ Therefore, if the Father is called Lord by reason of governing: ‘You, the Father, govern all things’ (Wis. 13:3), the Son, too, has dominion. Furthermore, the Father is Lord inasmuch as all things are ordained to Him as to first principle and end of all things. So, too, the Son, Who is the wisdom of God preceding all things, is Lord: ‘Wisdom was created before all things. Who can search it out?’ (Sir. 1:3).

But according to His human nature it also belongs to Christ to be heir and Lord of all things. First, by reason of the union, i.e., from the fact that that man was assumed in the person of the Son of God: ‘The Lord God exalted him as Savior’ (Ac. 5:31); ‘He set him over every principality and power and dominion’ (Eph. 1:19). Secondly, by reason of power, because all things obey and serve him: ‘All power has been given to me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18). Thirdly, by reason of subjection: ‘At the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those in heaven, on earth and, below the earth’ (Phil. 2:10).

But he says, **of all things**, which refers to the totality of all nature, in which he obtains dominion, as it says in Ps. 8 (v. 8): ‘You have subjected all things under his feet.’ It also refers to the whole human race, so that the sense would be: **of all things**, i.e., not only the Jews but also other men, as it says in Ps. 2 (v. 8): ‘Ask of me and I will give you the Gentiles as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession.’ *And of this it is said* (Est. 13:11, Vulgate): ‘You are Lord of all.’

22. – Then (v. 2) when he says, **by whom also he made the world**, he shows the power of Christ's activity, i.e., why He has been appointed heir of all things. It was not because He was born at a certain moment of time and merited this by leading a good life, as Photinus says, but because all things were originally made by Him, as they were made by the Father. For it was through Him that the Father made all things. For through Him the Father made the world. But it should be noted that the grammatical object of the preposition 'by' or 'through' designates the cause of an act: in one way, because it causes a making on the part of the maker. For the making is midway between the maker and the thing made. In this usage the object of 'by' can designate the final cause motivating the maker, as an artisan works by gain; or the formal cause, as fire warms by heat; or even the efficient cause, as a bailiff acts through the king. But the Son is not the cause making the Father act through Him in any of these ways any more than He is the cause of His proceeding from the Father. But sometimes the object of 'by' designates the cause of the action, taken from the viewpoint of the thing made, as an artisan acts through a hammer; for the hammer is not the cause of the artisan's action, but it is the cause why an artifact made of iron should proceed from the artisan, i.e., why iron [which the hammer strikes] be worked on by the artisan. This is the way the Son is the cause of things made and the way the Father works through the Son.

23. – But is the Son inferior to the Father? It seems so, because that which is the cause of a thing's being made seems to be an instrument. The answer is that if the power in the Father and in the Son were not the same numerically, and the activity not the same numerical activity, the objection would hold. But the fact is that the power and activity, as well as the nature and the *esse* of the Father and of the Son are the same. Therefore, the Father is said to make the world through Him, because He begot Him forming the world: 'Whatever the Father does, the Son also does' (Jn. 5:19). 'World' (*saeculum*) here means the temporal span of a created thing. Worlds, i.e., *saecula*, therefore, are successions of times. Therefore, he made not only sempiternal times (in the sense in which philosophers say that God alone made eternal things, and angels created temporal things), but also temporal things, which the Apostle calls worlds (*saecula*): 'By faith we understand that the world was framed by the Word of God' (Heb. 11:3); 'All things were made by him' (Jn. 1:3).

Thus he removes the Manichean error in two ways: first, in calling God the author of the Old Testament; secondly, in saying that He made temporal things.

1-2

Heb 1:3

³**He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.**

24. – Having shown Christ's greatness in regard to His unique origin, the majesty of His dominion and the power of His activity, the Apostle now shows His greatness in regard to the sublimity of His glory and dignity. This is divided into two parts: in the first he shows that Christ is worthy of His dignity; in the second he discloses this dignity (v. 2c). But he shows Him worthy of this dignity for two reasons: one is the ease with which He acts; the other is His diligence and strenuousness in acting: first, therefore, he describes this ease: secondly, His strenuousness (v. 2b).

25. – In regard to the first it should be noted that three things are required for a high dignity to be administered with ease: the first is wisdom, to avoid mistakes in governing: 'There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were be an error proceeding from the face of the prince: a fool set in high dignity' (Ec. 10:15); 'Through me kings reign' (Pr. 8:15). Secondly, a person must be of noble stock, lest his commands be scorned: 'Her husband is honorable in the gates, when he sits among the senators of the land' (Pr. 31:33). The third requirement is power in acting: 'Seek not to be made a judge, unless you have strength enough to extirpate iniquities' (Sir. 7:6).

These are the three marks the Apostle uses to show that Christ is worthy of His dignity: first, because He is not only wise but is Wisdom itself; hence, he says, **he reflects the glory of God**; secondly, because He is not only noble but is nobility itself, because **he bears the very stamp [figure] of his substance**; thirdly, because He is not only powerful but is power itself: **upholding all things by his word of power**. But these are the three things which make a person worthy to possess great dignity.

26. – The first is clarity of wisdom: 'The wise shall possess glory' (Pr. 3:35). Hence, he shows Christ's wisdom when he says, **he reflects the glory of God**. Here it should be noted that according to Ambrose: 'Glory is fame accompanied by praise', i.e., public knowledge of someone's goodness. But as it says in Lk. (18:19): 'No one is good but God alone.' Hence, He is good *par excellence* and essentially, but other things are good by participation, so that God alone is good *par excellence*: 'My glory I give to no other' (Is. 42:8); 'To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever' (1 Tim. 1:17). Therefore, knowledge of God's goodness is called glory in a most excellent sense, i.e., clear knowledge of the divine goodness accompanied by praise. Such knowledge is possessed by men up to a certain point: 'I know now in part' (1 Cor. 13:12), but perfectly by God alone: 'No one has ever seen God' (Jn. 1:18). It is true that not even the angels, but God alone comprehends it. Therefore, only God's

knowledge of Himself is glory in the full sense, because He has perfect and clearest knowledge of Himself. But because splendor is that which is first emitted by a bright object, and His wisdom is something bright: 'The wisdom of a man shines in his countenance' (Ec. 8:1), it follows that the first conception of wisdom is, as it were, a splendor. Therefore, the Word of the Father, which is a certain concept of His intellect, is the splendor and wisdom by which He knows Himself. That is why the Apostle calls the Son the splendor of glory, i.e., of the clear divine knowledge. Thus, he identifies Him not only as wise but as begotten wisdom: 'I will not rest till her just one comes forth as brightness, and her savior be lighted as a lamp' (Is. 62:1).

27. – The second mark which makes a man worthy of great dignity is noble birth, which he shows in Christ, because he is **the very stamp of his substance**. For it is proper that along with wisdom there be nobility in a prince: 'And I took out of your tribes men over fifties and over tens, who might teach you all things' (Dt. 1:15). The word stamp [figure] here is used to denote a mark or an image. As if to say: the image of His substance.

Yet it should be noted that although an image implies a likeness, not every likeness is an image: for the whiteness on a canvas is not my whiteness; but an image is a likeness in species. Therefore, that is properly called an image of someone, which bears a likeness to his species, or is an expressed sign of the species. But among the accidents none is such an expressed sign of a species as a thing's figure. Hence, one who draws the figure of an animal draws its image. Therefore, the Son 'Who is the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15) is properly called the figure.

28. – But the figure of what? Of his nature [substance]. For there are many images of things: sometimes it is a sign representing the species but yet not agreeing with it in any way; as the image of a man on canvas, which in no sense possesses the true species of man. Sometimes it is similar to it in species not only in representing, but even in being, as the Son is the true image of His Father: 'Adam begot a son in his own image' (Gen. 5:3), i.e., in the nature of his species. Therefore, the Apostle adds, **of his substance**, because according to Augustine a son is called the image of the father, because he is of the same nature as he. He says, therefore, that he is the figure of his nature [substance].

29. – But why does he not say that He is the figure of His nature? Because it is possible for the nature of a species to be multiplied according to the multitude of individuals composed of matter and form. Hence, the son of Socrates does not have the same numerical nature as his father. But the substance is never multiplied; for the substance of the father is not distinct from the substance of the son: for substance is not divided according to diverse individuals. Therefore, because there is one and the same numerical nature in the Father and in the Son of God, he does not say 'the figure of His nature', but **of his substance**, which is indivisible: 'I and the Father are one' (Jn. 10:30); 'I in the Father and the Father in me' (Jn. 14:10).

30. – The third factor which makes a man worthy is strength; hence, it is stated in Sir. (7:6): ‘Seek not to be made a judge, unless you have strength enough to extirpate iniquities.’ Therefore, he shows this strength when he says, **upholding all things by his word of power**. For it is proper to princes and potentates to uphold: ‘Under whom they stoop that bear up the world’ (Jb. 9:13). Therefore, he upholds.

31. – But what does He uphold, and by what agency? In regard to the first it should be noted that anything which cannot stand by itself or walk needs to be upheld. But no creature of itself can subsist or act. The first statement is clear, because once the cause is removed, the effect is removed. But God is the cause of all subsistence, because He is no less the cause of a things’ continuance in existence and of its coming into existence than a builder is the cause of a house’s coming into existence. Hence, just as the house ceases coming into existence when the builder ceases to act, and just as the air ceases to be illuminated when the sun no longer shines; so, when the divine power is removed, the being, the coming-to-be and the substance of every creature is removed. Therefore, He upholds all things in their existence and in their activity: because when the divine influence is removed, all the activities of secondary causes are removed, because He is the first cause; and the first cause does more than the second: ‘Upon what are its bases grounded?’ (Jb. 38:6)

32. – But through what agency does he support them? **By his word of power**. For since the Apostle, when speaking of the creation of things, said that God made all things through the Son: By whom also He made the world, and since that through which a thing acts does not seem to act by its own power but by the power of the one through whom it acts, as the bailiff through whom the king acts by His own power. Hence, the Apostle says, he upholds all things by his word of power. For since the cause of existence and of conservation are the same, when he says that the Son is the cause of conservation, he is showing that He is also the cause of existence

33. – But is it not also by the Father’s power? It is also by His power, because the power of both is identical. He works, therefore, both by His own power and by the Father’s power, because His power comes from the Father. Yet the Apostle does not say, ‘by His power’, but **by his word of power**, in order to show that just as the Father produced all things by the Word: ‘He spoke and they were made: He commanded and they were created’ (Ps. 32:8), so the Son by the same Word that He is, made all things. By these words, therefore, the Apostle shows the strength of His power, because He has the same power as the Father: for the power by which the Father acts is the same as the power by which the Son acts.

34. – But a question arises here, because the Father, when He speaks, produces a Word; when the Word speaks, He should produce a word; and so the Word of the Father should be the word of the Son. The Greeks answer this by saying that just as the Son is the image of the Father, so the Holy Spirit is the image of the Son. This is the way Basil explains the phrase, supporting all things by his word of power, i.e., by the Holy Spirit. For just as the Son is the Word of the Father; so the Holy Spirit, they say, is the Word of the Son; consequently, the Son acts through Him just as the Father acts through the Son. Yet,

properly speaking, an utterance is not called a word, unless it proceeds as something conceived by the intellect in such a way that, as consequence, it proceeds in a likeness of species. But the Holy Spirit, even though He is like, is not like by reason of the way He proceeds, because He does not proceed as a concept issuing from an intellect, but as Love issuing from the will.

35. – But a question still remains about that Word. What is it? For a human command is either externally expressed by a sound, and this has no place in the godhead, because nothing is external to the divine nature, so as to proceed from the Son by Whom all things are upheld; or that command is inwardly conceived in the heart. But even that cannot stand, because nothing is conceived in God's mind but the eternal Word. Consequently, there would be two eternal Words, which it is blasphemous to say.

Therefore, the answer to this argument as Augustine says in explaining Jn. (12:48): 'The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day', is that I myself, Who am the Word of the Father, shall judge him. Similarly, in the phrase, by the word of his power, i.e., by himself Who is the powerful Word.

36. – Consequently, by those three characteristics he shows three things of Christ: for by the fact that he is the brightness, he shows his co-eternity with the Father; for in creatures splendor is coeval, and the Word is co-eternal. This is against Arius. But when he says, the image of his substance, he shows the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father. For since splendor is not of the same nature as the resplendent thing, then lest anyone suppose that it is not similar in nature, he says that it is the image or figure of His substance. But because the Son, even though He is of the same nature with the Father, would be lacking power, if He were weak, he adds, supporting all things by the word of his power. Therefore, the Apostle commends Christ on three points, namely, co-eternity, consubstantiality and equality of power.

37. – Then (v. 3b) he shows the second trait, which makes one worthy of great dignity, namely, strenuousness and industry in acting. For it was a display of great industry to merit by His suffering sin the assumed nature that which he already possessed by His own divine nature. Hence it is stated in Phil (2:8): 'he became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross: for which cause God also exalted him.' Therefore, to purify from sin, even though it belongs to Him in virtue of His divine nature, belongs to Him also by the merit of His Passion; hence Sir. (47:13) says: 'The Lord took away his sins and exalted his horn forever'; 'he will save his people from their sins' (Mt. 1:21).

38. – It belongs to Christ to cleanse by reason of His divine nature and by reason of His special sonship. By reason of His divine nature, because guilt or sin is uniquely an evil of the rational creature, and God alone can repair such an evil. For sin lies in the will, which God alone can move: 'The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable; who can know it? I am the Lord who searches the heart and proves the reins' (Jer. 17:9). The reason for this is that something close to the end is brought to its end only by the first cause. But the will is concerned with the ultimate end, because it is made for enjoying God;

therefore, it is moved by God alone. Therefore, since Christ is true God, it is obvious that He can cause purification from sins: ‘Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ (Lk. 5:21)

39. – But by appropriation it belongs also to Christ. To understand this it should be noted that in sin is involved, first of all, a transgression of the eternal law and of God’s rights, since all sin is an iniquity which transgresses the law: ‘They have transgressed the law, they have changed the ordinance, they have broken the everlasting covenant’ (Is. 24:5). Therefore, since the eternal law and divine right stem from the eternal Word, it is clear that cleansing from sins is Christ’s prerogative, inasmuch as He is the Word: ‘he sent his Word and healed them’ (Ps. 106:20). Secondly, sin involves a loss of the light of reason and, consequently, of God’s wisdom in man, since such a light is a participation of divine wisdom: ‘And because they had not wisdom, they perished in their folly’ (Bar. 3:28); ‘They err that work evil’ (Pr. 14:22). Furthermore, according to the Philosopher, all evil is ignorance. Therefore, to set aright according to divine wisdom belongs to the One who is divine wisdom. But this is Christ: ‘We preach Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God’ (1 Cor. 1:24); ‘For by wisdom they were healed’ (Wis. 9:19). Thirdly, in sin is a deformity of the likeness of God in man: ‘The heart of fools shall be unlike’ (Pr. 15:13). Therefore, it belongs to the Son to correct this deformity, because He is the image of the Father: ‘Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly’ (1 Cor. 15:49). Fourthly, there is a loss of the eternal inheritance, the sign of which was man’s expulsion from Paradise: ‘God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons’ (Gal. 4:4). Therefore, it is obvious that it belongs to Christ to purge sins both by reason of His human nature and by reason of the divine.

40. – But how did He effect this purgation? It is clear from this. For in sin is a perversity of will by which man withdraws from the unchangeable good. To correct this, Christ bestowed sanctifying grace: ‘Justified freely by his grace’ (Rom. 3:24). Secondly, there is in the soul a stain left by the perversity of the will. To remove this stain He gave His blood: ‘He loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood’ (Rev. 1:5). Thirdly, there is a debt of punishment, which a man must pay. To satisfy this debt He offered Himself as a victim on the altar of the cross: ‘Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it in order to sanctify it’ (Eph. 5:25). Fourthly, there is slavery under the devil, to whom man subjected himself by sin, because ‘whoever commits sin is the servant of sin’ (Jn. 8:34). To save us from this slavery He redeemed us: ‘You have redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth’ (Ps. 30:6).

41. – Then (v. 3c) he describes His dignity. As if to say: It does not seem improper for Him to sit on the right hand of majesty, because He is the splendor and the figure and the upholder of all things. But in the word sit three things are usually implied: One is the authority of the one seated: ‘When I sat as a king with the army standing about him’ (Jb. 29:25). In the divine court there are many who serve, because Dan. (7:10) says: ‘Thousands of thousands ministered to him and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him.’ But no one is described as sitting there, because all present are servants and ministers:

‘Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them’ (Heb. 1:14); but He alone has royal dignity: ‘And he came even to the ancient of days: and he gave him power and glory and a kingdom’ (Dan. 7:13); ‘When the Son of man shall come in his majesty and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty’ (Mt. 25:3). Then he continues: ‘Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand: ‘Come, you blessed of my father’ (Mt. 25:34). The second implication is the stability of the one sitting: ‘Stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high’ (Lk. 24:49; ‘His power is an everlasting power’ (Dan. 7:14); ‘Jesus Christ, yesterday and today and the same for ever’ (Heb. 13:8). Furthermore, sitting sometimes implies humility, because the person seated is below those who stand: ‘Thou hast known my sitting down’ (Ps. 138:2). But that is not the sense in which it is taken here, but in the first two.

42. – But on the other hand, it says in Ac. (7:55): ‘I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.’ The answer is that sitting and standing and all such postures are said of God metaphorically. Consequently, there are various reasons why He is said to be standing and sitting. He is seated because of His immortality, but standing because that posture is best for resisting firmly. Hence, He stood as though prepared to help Stephen in his agony.

43. – But the Apostle continues, that he sits **at the right hand**. If this is referred to the divine nature, the sense is this: **at the right hand**, i.e., on a par with the Father; but if it is referred to the human nature, the sense is **at the right hand**, i.e., in the more excellent goods of the Father: ‘He sits on the right hand of God’ (Mk 16:19); ‘The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand’ (Ps. 109:1). But among those who have assistants some are simply greater, as the king and emperor; others are not absolutely greater, but only in some sense, as overseers and bailiffs. But Christ is not seated on the right of any of His inferior judges, as though He were a bailiff, but on the right of one absolutely great, because He sits on the right hand majesty’ (Pr. 25:27). But Christ, even though He is seated **on the right hand of majesty**, has a majesty of His own, because He has the same majesty as the Father: ‘When the Son of man comes in his majesty’ (Mt. 25:31): ‘Of him the Son of man shall be ashamed, when he comes in his majesty and that of the Father’ (Lk. 9:26).

44. – But he does not say of his majesty alone, but **on high**, i.e., above every creature: ‘I dwell in the highest places’ (Sir. 24:7); therefore, He sits on high, because He is raised above all creatures: ‘For your magnificence is elevated above the heavens’ (Ps. 8:2). According to Chrysostom, the Apostle is speaking here after the manner of one who is teaching a child, who cannot bear to have everything proposed to him, but must be led gradually, now saying difficult things, now proposing easy things. So here, he says divine things, when he says, by a Son, and human things when he says, whom he has appointed heir of all things (v.2).

1-3

Heb 1:4-7

⁴ **having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.** ⁵For to what angel did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? ⁶And again, when he brings the first-born into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” ⁷Of the angels he says, “Who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire.”

45. – As mentioned above, the Apostle devotes this entire first chapter to extolling Christ over the angels by reason of His excellence; hence he lists four things pertaining to Christ’s excellence: first, His origin, because He is the Son; secondly, His dominion, because He is the heir; thirdly, His power, because He made the world; fourthly, His honor, because He sits on the right hand of majesty. But now the Apostle shows that Christ exceeds the angels in these four points: first, in His sonship; secondly, in His dominion (v.6); thirdly, in the work of creation (v.10); fourthly, in regard to the Father’s confession (v.13). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states his proposition; secondly, he proves it (v.5).

46. – He says, therefore: **[Being made] having become as much superior to the angels**, i.e., holier and nearer to God. In these words he suggests Christ’s excellence as compared with the angels: ‘Setting him on his right hand in the heavenly places above all principality and power’ (Eph. 1:20).

But here a question arises. How does the Apostle mean this? Is it according to the divine nature or the human: because according to the divine it does not seem to be true, for according to that nature he was begotten, not made; whereas according to the human nature He is not better than the angels: ‘But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels’ (Heb. 2:9). The answer is that Christ had two things according to the human nature in this life, namely, the infirmity of the flesh; and in this way He was lower than the angels: but He also had fullness of grace, so that even in His human nature he was greater than the angels in grace and glory: ‘We have seen him as it were the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth’ (Jn. 1:14). But this is not how the Apostle understood it, for he does not mean that He was made better in regard to grace, but by reason of the union of human nature with the divine; so He is said to be made, inasmuch as by effecting that union He became better than the angels, and should be called and really be the son of God.

47. – Hence, he continues, **as he has obtained a more excellent name than they**. In regard to this name he discloses three differences: first, as to the signification of the name, because the proper name of angels is that they are called angels, which is the name of a messenger. For an angel is a messenger. But the proper name of Christ is that He is called the Son of God; and this name is vastly different from ‘angel’, because no matter how great a difference you might imagine, there would still remain a greater difference,

because they are infinitely apart: ‘What is his name, and what is the name of his son, if thou knowest?’ (Pr. 30:4). For the name of the Son, as that of the Father, is incomprehensible: ‘He gave him a name which is above every name’ (Phil. 2:9).

But one might say that even the angels are called sons of God: ‘On a certain day when the sons of God came to stand before the Lord’ (Jb. 1:6). I answer that if they are called sons of God, they are not so essentially and by nature, but by a certain participation. But He is essentially the Son of God and, therefore, has a name more excellent than the others. And this is the second difference, because they differ as to mode: ‘Who among the sons of God shall be like to God?’ (Ps. 88:7). As if to say: No one by nature.

As to the third he says that He inherited that name; for inheritance follows upon origin. Hence, Christ is the Son by origin and by nature, but the angels by a gift of grace: ‘Here is the heir:’ (Mt. 21:38). Hence, He inherited that name, but not so the angels: and this is the third difference.

48. – Then (v.5) he proves what he has said: first, he discusses the name inasmuch as it belongs to Christ according to His divinity; secondly, inasmuch as it belongs to Him according to His human nature (v. 5b).

49. – In regard to the first he adduces the authority of Ps. 2 (v.7): ‘The Lord said to me: You are my son; this day have I begotten you.’ And this in answer to the question: **To what angel has God ever said, You are my son?** As if to say: He never said these words to any of the angels, but to Christ alone.

Here three things are to be noted: first, the manner of His origin, in the word, **said**; secondly, the uniqueness of His sonship, in the words, **You are my son**; thirdly, its eternity when he says, **This day have I begotten you**. But the manner of His origin is not carnal, but spiritual and intellectual: ‘For God is spirit’ (Jn. 4:29); consequently, He does not engender in a carnal way, but in a spiritual and intellectual way. But the intellect, when it speaks, engenders a word, which is its concept; therefore, it is significant that he says that the Lord said to me, i.e., that the Father said to the Son. Consequently, for the Father’s intellect to speak is to conceive the Word in His heart: ‘My heart has uttered a good word’ (Ps. 44:1); ‘God speaks once, and repeats not the selfsame thing the second time’ (Jb. 33:14); ‘I came out of the mouth of the Most High’ (Sir. 24:5). But if many others are called sons, nevertheless, it is His unique property to be the natural Son of God; but others are called sons of God, because they partake of the word of God: ‘He called gods those who heard the word of God’ (Jn. 10:35). But in regard to the third, that generation is not temporal, but eternal, because this day I have begotten you. Now time differs from eternity, because time varies as the motions whose measure it is; therefore, it is named by the succession of past and future. But eternity is the measure of an unchangeable thing; consequently, in eternity there is not variation due to succession of past and future, but there is only the present. Therefore, it is signified by an adverb of the present tense: this day, i.e., in eternity.

But that which is coming to be, because it does not yet exist, is incomplete; and that which has come to be is complete and, therefore, perfect. Consequently, He does not say, ‘I begot you’, but **I have begotten**, because He is perfect. Yet, lest it be supposed that His entire engendering took place in the

past, he adds, **today**, and joins the past to the present, saying, **I have begotten you today**. This teaches us that this engendering is always going on and is always complete. Consequently, in the word, **today**, permanence is designated; but in **I have begotten**, perfection. As if to say: You are perfect, Son; and yet your generation is eternal and you are always being engendered by me, as light is perfect in the air and yet is always proceeding from the sun: 'His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity' (Mic. 5:2): 'From the womb before the day star I have begotten you' (Ps. 109:3). But this could be explained also of temporal generation. As if to say: **today**, i.e., in time **I have begotten you**.

50. – Then (v. 5b) he clarifies his conclusion that this belongs to Christ according to His human nature. And he does this by another authority. According to a Gloss, Isaiah says: 'I will be to him a Father', yet nothing like this is to be found in Isaiah, except the statement: 'A son has been given to us' (Is. 9:6). But in 2 Sam. (7:14) and (1 Chr. 28) we find these very words spoken by the Lord to David in regard to Solomon, through whom Christ was prefigured.

51. – Yet it should be noted that in the Old Testament some things are said of figures not insofar as they are things, but insofar as they are figures; and then they do not apply to Christ, except insofar as He is prefigured. For example in Ps. 71 certain things are said of David or of Solomon, only inasmuch as they prefigured; but other things are said of them, inasmuch as they are men. Such things can then be considered as applying to them as well as to Christ. Thus, 'and he will rule from sea to sea' can never be verified of Solomon. So, in the present instance, although certain things are said of Solomon, they can also be said of Christ, Who was prefigured by him.

52. – He says, therefore, **I will be**, which is in the future tense, to denote that the Incarnation of the Son was to occur at some future time: 'But when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son made of a woman' (Gal. 4:4). But above, when He spoke of the eternal generation, He said, **You are**, without implying any movement; but here, when He speaks of the temporal, He says, **unto me a Son**, which denotes the terminus of some motion. For assumption implies a movement toward sonship. And because every movement occurs through the action of something heading toward a definite effect, he first mentions the action of the maker, because the assumption was not made in virtue of the human but of the divine, when he says, **I will be to you a Father**, i.e., I will assume him into a union with the person of the Son.

Then he mentions the effect which resulted, because he was assumed into a personal union with the Son: **He shall be to me a Son**. Luke says of he first: 'The power of the Most High', i.e., of the One making the assumption, 'will over-shadow you' (Lk. 1:35). Of the second it says in Rom. (1:3): 'Who was made to him of the seed of David.'

53. – Again, **I will be to him**, i.e., I will glorify him to his honor and profit: ‘Glorify me, Father’ (Jn. 17:5). And **he will be to me**, i.e., to my honor, by manifesting my name to men: ‘I have manifested your name to the men’ (Jn. 17:6).

54. – Then (v.6) he speaks of Christ’s dominion, whereby He is heir of all things. Here he does three things: first, he describes His dominion, particularly over the angels; secondly, the nature of that dominion on the part of the angels (v.7); thirdly, on the part of Christ (v.8).

55. – In regard to the first he adduces the authority of a psalm when he says, **And let all God’s angels worship him**. This is from Ps. 96: ‘The Lord has reigned, let the earth rejoice.’ For worship is paid only to the Lord; therefore, if the angels worship Him, He is their Lord. The Apostle, when he adduces this authority, first touches on the Psalmist’s intention when he says, **and again, when he brings the first-born into the world**. Thus the Psalmist is speaking of Christ’s coming into the world; consequently, he says, and when the Scripture brings in, i.e., was to bring in the first-born into the world. As if to say: ‘We have already said that Christ is a Son above the angels; therefore, He is principally begotten by the Father. Hence, He deserves to be called the first-born: ‘That he might be the first-born among many brethren’ (Rom. 8:29). But this first-born would have to be introduced into the world. And note how precisely the Apostle speaks: for he first says that He is from the Father, **I will be to him a Father**; secondly, that He was assumed into a unity of person, **and he will be to me a Son**.

56. – But now he brings Him to the notice of men, calling the Incarnation His introduction to the world.

But on the other hand, Christ calls it a departure: ‘I have come out of the Father, and am come into the world’ (Jn. 16:28). The answer is that His going out is also an introduction, for if a person seeks to be reconciled to a prince, a mediator first goes out to him and later introduces him. A like situation is found in 1 Sam. (20:42) between David and Jonathan. Thus, Christ, the mediator of God and men, first went to the men and then brought them back reconciled: ‘For it became him who had brought many children into glory’ (inf. 2:10). Or He introduces Him to men’s hearts, because the Scripture, speaking of Christ’s coming, says that he must be acceptable to men’s hearts. But this acceptance takes place by faith: ‘That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17): ‘Declare his glory among the Gentiles’ (Ps. 95:3). For when Scripture says that the Gentiles should believe, it says that Christ is about to enter their hearts.

57. – The use of the word, **again**, is explained in a number of ways. Chrysostom says that the Scripture speaks of the Incarnation of the Word, which is an introduction, not once but again and again. Or another way: He was first in the world invisibly by the power of His divinity, but He introduces Him into the world again according to a visible presence of His humanity. Or another way: because he had said above, to him a Father, i.e., I will assume Him to my personal unity; and when He introduced Him again, namely, the first-born, He is introduced to the unity of person, because it is not enough to say that He is

introduced, unless mention is made how He is introduced, because He is not introduced as though belonging to the world or as the angels, but above all: 'The host of heaven adored you' (Neh 9:5); 'All the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients fell down before the throne and adored God' (Rev. 7:11).

58. – Then (v. 7) the reason is given on the part of the angels, why they adore Him. As if to say: It is just that they adore, because they are ministers; hence, he says, **he makes his angels winds [spirits] and his servants flames of fire [ministers]**. For God sometimes acts by enlightening the intellect: 'He enlightens every man coming into the world' (Jn. 1:9); but sometimes he moves a man to His work: 'You have worked our works in us' (Is. 26:9). God does the first of these by means of His angels: 'You enlighten wonderfully from the everlasting hills' (Ps. 75:5). He also does the second in us through His angels, as Dionysius said. Inasmuch as he enlightens through them, they are called messengers; for it is the office of a messenger to declare the things which are in his master's heart. But inasmuch as they are mediators of divine works, they are both messengers and ministers. But what sort they are is described by bodily things best suited for this: one is air, whose properties are well, suited to a messenger, although the property of fire best suits a minister. For air is receptive of light and of impressions; it gives a true picture of what it receives, and it moves rapidly. These are the characteristics that a good messenger should have, namely, that he receive the news well, report it accurately and do so swiftly. And these characteristics are found in angels: for they receive divine illuminations well, since they are clean mirrors, according to Dionysius: 'Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven' (Mt. 18:10). Furthermore, they best transmit what they receive: 'God signified the things which must shortly come to pass, sending by his angel to his servant, John' (Rev. 1:1). And they are swift: 'Go, you swift angels, to a nation rent and torn to pieces' (Is. 18:2). But they are called spirits, because every invisible substance is called a spirit; hence, even the air is called a spirit. Furthermore, they are fire, inasmuch as they are ministers. But of all the elements fire is the most active and most efficacious for acting; hence in Ps. 103 (v. 5) it says of angels: 'You make your ministers a burning fire. Fire also causes heat, by which charity is signified: 'The lamps thereof are fire and flames' (S of S 8:6). Again, fire always moves upward; so, too, the angels and good ministers always refer what they do to God's glory, as is clear of Tobias' angel: 'Bless the God of heaven' (Tob. 12:6). He does not say, 'Bless me', but 'bless the God of heaven.' Not so the evil angel who says: 'All these will I give you, if falling down you will adore me' (Mt. 4:9). But the good angel, as a good minister, says: 'See you do it not' (Rev. 22:9); and he continues: 'Adore God' (Rev. 22:9).

Heb 1:8-9

⁸But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your comrades.”

59. – Having proved by scriptural authority that the angels are spirits, the Apostle now proves this with a reason taken on the part of Christ. Hence, he intends here to prove Christ’s royal dignity. He does two things: first, he commends Christ’s royal dignity; secondly, he shows His fitness for it (v. 9b). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he commends Christ’s royal dignity; secondly, the equity of His rule (v. 8b); thirdly, the goodness of His rule (v. 9a).

60. – He says, therefore, **But of the Son he says: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.** These are the words of the Father speaking through the tongue of a prophet as by a writer’s pen. He says, therefore: ‘O God, the Son, your throne is for ever and ever’. In this is denoted the royal majesty; for a throne is the king’s seat, a chair is the teacher’s seat and a tribunal the judge’s seat. All of these belong to Christ, because He is our king: ‘He will reign in the house of Jacob’ (Lk. 1:32) and, therefore, deserves a throne: ‘His throne is as the sun’ (Ps. 88:38). He is a teacher and, therefore, needs a chair: ‘We know that you have been sent a teacher from God’ (Jn. 3:2). He is also our judge: ‘The Lord, our judge, the Lord our lawgiver’ (Is. 33:22). Therefore, he deserves a tribunal: ‘All of us must be manifested before the tribunal of Christ’ (2 Cor. 5:10).

The throne belongs to Him according to His divine nature, inasmuch as He is God: ‘The king of the whole earth is God’ (Ps. 46:8). But as man it belongs to Him as a result of His Passion, victory and resurrection: ‘To him that shall overcome I will give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome and am set down with my Father in His throne’ (Rev. 3:21). This throne is eternal: ‘And of his kingdom there shall be no end’ (Lk. 1:33); ‘His power is an eternal power, which shall not be taken away’ (Dan. 7:14). But it is clear that that kingdom is eternal and that it belongs to Him, because He is God: ‘Your kingdom is a kingdom of all ages’ (Ps. 144:13). It also belongs to Him as man, and this for two reasons: one, because that kingdom is not ordained to temporal affairs, but to eternal: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ (Jn. 18:36). For He reigns in order to direct men to eternal life. But this is not so of human kingdoms; hence, their kingdoms end with the present life. Another reason is that the Church, which is His kingdom, will last until the end of the world, when Christ will deliver the kingdom to God and to the Father to be consummated and made perfect.

61. – Then he commends his kingdom on its equity when he says, **a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom.** And this kingdom is fittingly described by the scepter: for a tyrannical kingdom differs

from that of a king, because the former exists for the tyrant's benefit with great harm to the subjects; but a kingdom is particularly ordained to the benefit of the subjects. Consequently, the king is father and shepherd: for a shepherd does not correct with a sword but with a scepter: 'I will visit their iniquities with a rod' (Ps. 88:33). Furthermore, a shepherd uses a rod to direct his flock: 'Feed your people with your rod' (Mic. 7:14). For a rod sustains the infirm: 'your rod and your staff have strengthened me' (Ps. 22:2). Furthermore, it troubles the enemy: 'A scepter shall spring up from Israel and shall strike the chiefs of Moab' (Num. 24:17). But this is the scepter of justice: 'He shall reprove with equity for the meek of the earth' (Is. 11:4).

But it should be noted that sometimes a person rules according to the rigor of the law, as when he observes things that according to themselves are just. But it happens that something is just according to itself, but when compared to something else, it causes suffering, if it is observed; consequently, it is necessary that the common law be applied, and if this is done, then there is a rule of equity. But the kingdom of the Old Testament was ruled according to the rigor of justice: 'A yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear' (Ac. 15:10). But the kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of equity and justice, because in it only sweet observance is imposed: 'My yoke is sweet and my burden is light' (Mt. 11:30); 'He shall judge the world with justice' (Ps. 95:13).

62. – Then (v. 9) he commends the goodness of the ruler. For some observe equity not for the love of justice but from fear or for glory. And such a kingdom does not last. But He observes equity for the love of justice. He says, therefore, **You have loved justice**. As if to say: Your scepter is just, because you have loved justice: 'Love Justice, you that judge the earth' (Wis. 1:1). But one who does not love justice is not just: 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice' (Mt. 5:6). Yet some love justice but are lax in correcting injustice. However, Christ hates, i.e., reproves justice: 'I have hated the unjust' (Ps. 118:113). Similarly, He hates the wicked and his wickedness: 'The highest hates sinners, and has mercy on the penitent' (Sir. 12:3). Therefore, he says, **you have hated iniquity**.

63. – Then (v. 9b) he shows Christ's fitness for accomplishing and governing. But a question arises here concerning the statement, **Therefore, God your God has anointed you**. In those words He is speaking of a spiritual anointing, whereby Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit. But is He so filled, because He loved justice? Then He merited grace. But this is contrary to Rom. (11:6): 'If from works, then not from grace.' And this is a general reason, because Christ in His conception was filled with the Holy Spirit: 'Full of grace and truth' (Jn. 1:14). Therefore, He did not merit. I answer that here one must avoid Origen's error. For he wished all spiritual creatures, and even the soul of Christ, to have been created from the beginning, and according as they have clung to God more or less, or withdrew from Him in the freedom of their judgment, a distinction exists between them and souls. Hence, in the *Periarchon* he says that the soul of Christ, because it adhered more strongly to God by loving justice and hating iniquity, merited a greater fullness of grace than other spiritual substances. But it is heretical to say that any soul, even Christ's soul,

was created before its body. And this is especially true of Christ, because His soul was created and His body formed in the same instant. And the totality was assumed by the Son of God.

Why, then, does he say, therefore? One Gloss seems to feel with Origen. But if we would save it, we must say that in Scripture something is said to come to be, when it is being made known; as when it is stated in Phil (2:8): ‘He was made obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. Wherefore, God has exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name.’

Did Christ, then, merit to be God by the merit of His Passion? Not at all. For this is Photinus’ error. Therefore, it should be said that Christ, being God, exceeds all merit; but by the Passion He merited to be manifested everywhere as God, and that God gave Him such a name that would be above every name. Therefore, the fact that he says here, **therefore, God has anointed you**, has the following sense: Since you have loved justice, you deserve to have this matter known. Or, another way and better, he therefore does not refer to a meritorious case, but to a final cause. As if to say: In order that you might have these things, namely, a perpetual throne, a scepter of justice, and the other things mentioned, God has anointed you with the oil of holiness, which the Lord commanded to be done, when the vessels and priests were anointed, as well as the kings, as is clear in regard to Solomon and the prophets, namely, Elisha.

64. – But why was that sanctification brought about by anointing? The reason is literal. For oriental men were anointed before celebrations to prevent exhaustion, because they live in a very warm climate. But poor people were anointed at festivities: ‘I, thy handmaid, have nothing in my house, but a little oil to anoint me’ (1 Kg 4:2). But in the Scripture men were anointed either for the celebration of a feast or for a celebrated person: then to show Christ’s excellence, he says that He was anointed with the oil of gladness. For He is a king: ‘Behold the king shall reign in justice’ (Is. 32:1); ‘For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is out lawgiver, and he shall save us’ (Is. 33:32). He is also a priest: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedech’ (Ps. 109:4). He was also a prophet: ‘The Lord, your God, will raise up to you a prophet of your nation and of your brethren like unto me’ (Dt. 18:15). It also befits Him to be anointed with the oil of holiness and gladness: for the sacraments, which are vessels of grace, were instituted by Him: ‘And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, diverse kind of vessels’ (Is. 22:24). This anointing also befits Christians, for they are kings and priests: ‘You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood’ (1 Pt. 2:9); ‘You have made us a kingdom and priests for our God’ (Rev. 3:10). Furthermore, He has the Holy Spirit, Who is the spirit of prophecy: ‘I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy’ (Jl 2:28). Therefore, all are anointed with an invisible anointing: ‘Now he that has confirmed us with you in Christ and that has anointed us is God: who has also sealed us and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts’ (2 Cor. 1:21); ‘But you have the unction from the Holy One and know all things’ (1 Jn. 2:20).

65. – But what comparison is there between the anointed Christ and anointed Christians? This comparison, namely, that He has it principally and first, but we and others have it from Him: ‘Like the

precious ointment on the head that ran down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron' (Ps. 132:2). And, therefore, he says, beyond thy comrades: 'Of his fullness we have all received' (Jn. 1:16). Hence, others are called holy, but He is the Holy of holies; for He is the root of all holiness.

But he says, **with the oil of gladness**, because spiritual gladness proceeds from that anointing: 'The kingdom of God on not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17); 'The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace...' (Gal. 5:22); 'That he may make the face cheerful with oil' (Ps. 103:15); 'The oil of joy for mourning' (Is. 61:3).

66. – The fact that he says, **God, your God**, is explained in two ways: in one way as being a repetition of the nominative case. As if to say: God has anointed you with God Himself, but we through you, the mediator of God and men, the man Christ: 'By whom he has given us most gracious promises' (2 Pt. 1:4). In another way according to Augustine, so that one is in the nominative case and the other in the vocative. As if to say: O God Who art God the Son, God the Father has anointed you with the oil of gladness. But since Christ was not anointed as God, (for as God it is not fitting that He receive the Holy Spirit, but rather should give Him), the second explanation does not seem to be true. I answer that He is the same person, both God and man: but He was anointed as man. And when it is said, **God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness**, the one anointing is God and man, and the one anointed is God and man, and one with Him in person.

1-5

Heb 1:10-12

¹⁰And, “**You, Lord, founded the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands;** ¹¹**they will perish, but you remain; they will all grow old like a garment,** ¹²**like a mantle you will roll them up, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.”**

67. – Above, the Apostle mentioned four things in which Christ excelled the angels, and he proved two of them, namely, that He excels them, because He is the Son and because He is the heir. Now he proves the third, namely, that He excels them in His power of acting, because through Him the Father made the world. But the Apostle proves this on the authority of the same prophet. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows the power of His activity inasmuch as he is Creator; secondly, inasmuch as there is a difference between Creator and creature. In regard to the first he does two things: first, he describes the creation of earth; secondly, of the heavens (v. 10b).

68. – It should be noted in regard to the first that this can be interpreted in two ways: in one way, so that it is taken to be a word of the prophet directed to the Father. As if to say: **You, Lord**, namely God the Father, **founded the earth in the beginning**, i.e., in your Son, Who is the beginning: ‘I am the beginning who also speak to you’ (Jn. 8:25). And this is the same as saying: You founded the earth through the Son: ‘You have made all things in your wisdom’ (Ps. 103:24). But the Son is Wisdom begotten: hence, above he called him the splendor of His glory. And what he says here corresponds to what he had said above: by whom also he made the earth. In another way, so that it is a word directed to the Son. As if to say: **And you, O Lord, founded the earth in the beginning**, namely of time. This is to exclude the opinion of those who say that the world is eternal; or in the beginning, namely, of the production of things, to exclude the opinion of those who say that bodily things were not created with spiritual things, but after: ‘In the beginning God created heaven and earth’ (Gen. 1:1); ‘He that lives forever created all things together’ (Sir. 18:1).

69. – But it should be noted that the earth can be distinguished from heaven in three ways: in one way, so that by the earth is understood the element earth, and by heaven the higher bodies; so that just as Moses made not mention of the air, because it exists with water, so here he understood by heaven the very heaven and the other two elements, namely, air and fire, which most resemble the nature of the heavens and which is clear from their place. And this is the way Moses took it (Gen. 1:1). And he says, **you didst found**, to show that three things pertain to the earth: first, the earth’s rest, for all other things partake of motion, but the earth alone according to its totality remains motionless. As if to say: **You have founded**, i.e., firmly established: ‘Who has founded the earth upon its own bases’ (Ps. 103:5). Secondly, to show the perpetuity of the world, for the foundation of a building is its most enduring part: ‘But the earth

remains for ever' (Ec. 1:4). And according to this he says, **You have founded**, i.e., established for ever. Thirdly, to show the order of the earth; because, just as the foundation, which is the first part of a building, is below, so earth holds the lowest place among the elements: 'My hand also has founded the earth' (Is. 48:13); 'His hands formed the dry land' (Ps. 94:5). He does not say, 'You made the heavens', but **the works of your hands are the heavens**, because that which a person makes with his hands, he seems to make with greater care. Consequently, he speaks this way to signify their nobility and beauty: 'My right hand measured the heavens' (Is. 48:13).

70^a. – In another way, so that by earth he understands every bodily nature; then you founded, because matter is the place and foundation of forms; but by heavens, spiritual substances: 'Praise him, you heavens of heavens' (Ps. 148:5). And these are the works of His hands, because He made them to His own image and likeness. Or, by earth those who are imperfect in the Church and are the foundation of the others (for if there were no active life in the Church, the contemplative life could not exist), and by heavens, the contemplatives. And these were made in the Church in the beginning, i.e., by the Son: 'I have placed my words in your mouth, that you might found the earth, i.e., the imperfect, and plant the heavens' (Is. 51:16).

70^b. – But in regard to the heavens, he says, **the works of your hands are the heavens**. He says, **the works of your hands**, and not simply, **you made the heavens**, for four reasons: first, to exclude the error of those who say that God is the soul of the world and, consequently, what the whole earth and its parts should be worshipped as God, as idolaters did. But he excludes this when he says, **the works of your hands are the heavens**. As if to say: They are not proportioned to you as the body is to the soul, but they are subject and proportioned to your power and will: 'Lest perhaps, lifting up your eyes to heaven, you see the sun and the moon and all the stars of heaven, and being deceived by error, you adore them' (Dt. 4:19). Secondly, to designate the dignity and beauty of the heavens, because we say that we make that with our hands which we make carefully. Therefore, to show that the heavens were made by divine wisdom in a more excellent way than the other bodily creatures, he says, **the works of your hands are the heavens**, and this is clear; because the diversity in those lower things can be reduced to the disposition of the matter, but the diversity of heavenly bodies can be reduced only to divine wisdom. That is why, whenever mention is made of the creation of the heavens, prudence and understanding or something of that sort are also mentioned: 'The Lord has established the heavens by prudence' (Pr. 3:19); 'Who made the heavens in understanding' (Ps. 135:5). Thirdly, to show that in the heavens the divine power of the Creator is more striking; for there is nothing in creatures in whose condition so much of God's power appears; and this is because of their magnitude and order: 'For by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen' (Wis. 13:5). Fourthly, to show that of all bodies the heavenly body receives God's influence more directly: 'Do you know the order of heaven, and can you set down the reason thereof on the earth' (Jb. 38:33)? As if to say: 'If you consider carefully the disposition of the heavens, you cannot attribute the cause of its order to any earthly thing, but to God.'

70^c. – It can be explained in another way, so that by earth is meant all bodily matter, and by heavens, spiritual substances. Then the sense is this: In the beginning of time you founded the earth, i.e., corporeal matter, i.e., you have established it as the foundation of forms. This is the way to understand the statement of Ps. 148 (v. 7): ‘Praise the Lord from the earth, you dragons and all you deeps.’ **But the heavens**, i.e., spiritual substances: ‘Praise him, you heavens of heavens’ (Ps. 148:4) **are the works of your hands**, because you made them to your image likeness.

70^d. – It can be explained a third way, so that by earth are understood the lowly ones in the Church. And they are said to be founded, because they are, as it were, the foundation of the others: for unless there were actives in the Church, the contemplatives would have no subsistence; **but the heavens**, the contemplatives and more perfect, **are the work of your hands**, i.e., endowed with a more outstanding excellence: ‘The heavens published the glory of God’ (Ps. 18:2); ‘Hear, O you heavens, and give ear’ (Is. 1:2).

71. – Then (v. 11) he shows the difference between Creator and creature, and this in regard to two things which are proper to the Creator; the first is eternity; the second is immutability (v. 11c). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he puts a limitation on the creature; secondly, no limitation on God (v. 11b).

72. – He says, therefore: **they**, i.e., the heavens, **shall perish**. But Ec. (1:4) says that ‘the earth stands forever’. Therefore, it seems that it will last longer than the heavens. I answer according to Augustine and the Philosopher that in every change there is a coming into existence and a ceasing to exist. Therefore, when he says that the heavens shall perish, this is not to be understood of their substance, concerning which Jb. (37:18) says: ‘The heavens are most strong, as if they were of molten brass’, but of their state which they now have: ‘I saw a new heaven and a new earth’ (Rev. 21:1); ‘The fashion of this world passes away’ (1 Cor. 7:31).

But how will they change their state? In various ways, because the higher heavens are moving in regard to place, but are not altered, whereas the lower heaven, namely, fire and air, are moved and altered and subject to corruption. Therefore, the state of all the heavens is changeable; but then, movement will cease in the higher heavens and corruption in the lower heavens, because the air will be purged by fire: ‘But the heavens and the earth which exist now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men’ (Ps. 101:13).

73. – Here he shows the permanence of the Creator. As if to say: ‘In you there is no change nor shadow of change’ (Jas. 1:17). This can be understood of Christ as man: ‘Jesus Christ, yesterday and today and forever’ (Heb. 13:8).

74. – Then (v. 11b) he shows the difference between God and creature so far as immutability is concerned. In regard to this he does two things: first, he mentions the mutability of the creature; secondly, the immutability of God (v. 12b). In regard to the first he does two things: first he describes the nature of the creature's mutability; secondly, he mentions that mutability (v. 12).

75. – In regard to the first it should be noted that old and new follow upon time. Hence only that can grow old which is somehow measured by time, whereas the mobile thing is measured by the 'now' of time. Therefore, newness and oldness can be found in the heavens. But the heavens do not grow old as though their substance shrank or were changed into something else, but only in regard to the length of time by which they will no longer be measured. Therefore, he says, **as a garment shall you change them**, not as though the cause of their change will be the loss of their power; for if the motion of the heavens ceased from a lack of power, that cessation would have a natural cause and could be isolated by natural reason, the contrary of which is stated in Mt. (24:36): 'Of that day and hour no one knows, no not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone.' Therefore, it will be due to some end that this motion will cease, because all bodily creatures are ordained to spiritual creatures, and all changed which serve generation and ceasing-to-be are ordained to the generation of man. Therefore, when the generation of men ceases, i.e., when the number of the elect and predestined is filled, that motion will cease; hence, it is called a garment, which is put on to be used and cast off, when it can be used no more. Thus, a man removes a warm garment in summer and a cool one with the coming of winter. Thus, therefore, the state of the world, which is now adjusted to that end, will no longer be adjusted, when the number of the elect is filled. Then it will be cast aside as a garment: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away' (Lk. 21:33).

76. – Then he posits that mutability when he says, **and as a garment shall you change them**, i.e., the heavens. Well does he say, **you shall change them**, because it will not be by their own power, nor of themselves, but by God's power that they will be changed from motion, as a garment which is put on to be used, and after it is used, is put off, as the seasons require. He says, **a garment**, because man's glory is both disclosed and hidden by a garment. So, too, God is both revealed and hidden by creatures: 'The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood' (Rom. 1:20); 'For by the glory of the beauty and of the creature, and the Creator of them may be seen' (Wis. 13:5). He says, **they shall be changed**, because they will remain changed for ever. The same is true of the spiritual heavens, which will perish from the present life through the death of the body: 'We all die and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth' (2 Sam. 14:14); 'The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart' (Is. 57:1). Likewise, they shall fail, because as it says below (8:13): 'That which decays and grows old is near its end.' And you shall change, namely, their bodies, when this bodily thing puts on incorruption (1 Cor. 15:53); and **they shall be changed**, namely, as to their mind, when they pass from seeing in a dark manner to seeing face to face: 'All the days in which I am now in warfare I expect until my change come' (Jb. 14:14).

77. – Then he mentions God’s immutability when he says, **but you are the same**. Here he does two things: first, he states his intention; secondly, he shows this by a sign; **and your years will never end**. He says, therefore, **they shall perish**, but you, namely, the Son of God, **are the same**, i.e., you continue the same and are never changed: ‘I am the Lord and I change not’ (Mal 3:6); ‘With whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration’ (Jas. 1:17). He gives the sign of this immutability when he says, your years never end.

Here it should be noted that God’s years are His duration, just as a man’s years are. But a man’s duration fails in two ways: first, in its parts, because, since he is temporal, one part succeeds another, and when one succeeds, the predecessor fails; secondly, as a whole, because it ceases altogether. But neither of these failures is found in God’s duration, because He continues for ever, and the parts of His duration are eternal, and all exist together without succession: ‘The number of his years cannot be computed’ (Jb. 36:26).

78. – But if His duration is one and unchangeable, why say years in the plural and not year in the singular? The reason is that our intellect takes its knowledge of intelligible through the sensible, because all our knowledge is drawn from the senses; hence even God, Who is absolutely simple, is described under a likeness of bodily things: ‘I say the Lord sitting upon a throne lofty and elevated’ (Is. 6:1). So, too, His duration is described by us in terms of what is familiar, even though it is uniform and simple. Hence, it is sometimes called a year, and sometimes a day or a month, because it includes all of time’s differences.

1-6

Heb 1:13-14

¹³**But to what angel has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies a stool for your feet”?** ¹⁴**Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?**

79. – Above, the Apostle proved three things in which Christ excels the angels; here he proves a fourth, namely, that He sits on the right hand of majesty, which pertains to His dignity. In regard to this he does two things: first, he adduces David’s authority to show this; secondly, he shows that the angels lack this dignity (v. 14). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he describes Christ’s dignity; secondly, he manifests this with a sign (v. 13b).

80. – He says, therefore: **to what angel has he**, namely, God, **ever said?** As if to say: It is not found that God said this to an angel, but He said it to Christ. And Christ Himself claims that this was said of Him. But what He says, namely, **sit at my right hand**, can be referred to the divine nature in which Christ is equal to the Father, because He has judiciary and royal power equal to the Father: ‘All that the Father has are mine’ (Jn. 16:15). Indeed, the Father Himself said this from eternity, because He engendered the Son by speaking, and by engendering gave Him equality with the Father. It can also be referred to the human nature, according to which He sits near the transcendent goods of the Father. In this case the Father spoke, when He joined His Word to a human nature.

81. – Then (v. 13b) he shows Christ’s dignity with a sign. But two questions arise here: first of all, because from all eternity all things are subject to the Son inasmuch as He is God; secondly, because in the resurrection Christ said: ‘All power is given to me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18), what does He expect shall be subjected to His footstool?

But it should be noted that something can be in someone’s power in two ways: in one way in regard to his authority, and then all things have been subject to the Son of God from all eternity, inasmuch as they were decreed to be done, and in the time they existed, they were subject to the Son of God as God, but to Him as man they were subject from the time of His conception as man. In another way, in regard to the exercise of His power; and then all things are not yet subject to Him, but only at the end of the world, because He does not yet exercise His power over all things by subjecting them to Him: ‘According to the operation whereby also he is able to subdue all things to Himself’ (Phil. 3:21).

But why does he say, **footstool**? Perhaps because that word signifies nothing more than full and perfect subjection, for that is said to be perfectly subject to someone which he can tread under foot; or because just as God is the head of Christ, as it says in 1 Cor. (11:3), so Christ’s feet would be His

humanity: ‘We shall adore in the place where his feet stood’ (Ps. 131:7). I will make them your footstool, i.e., not only will I subject your enemies to your divinity, but even to your humanity.

82. – Origen erred on this point, for he understood only one type of subjection, saying that just as being subject to the light is nothing more than being enlightened, so, since Christ is truth, justice and goodness and whatever else He can be called, to be subjected to the Savior is nothing less than to be saved. Therefore, he desired that in the end all things, including the devils, would be saved, because otherwise all things would not be subjected to Christ. But this is contrary to what is stated in Mt. (25:41): ‘Depart, you accursed, into everlasting fire.’

Hence, it should be noted that there are two types of subjection: one by the will of the subjects, as good ministers are subject to their master, as to their king; in this way, only the good are subject to Christ. The other is by the will of the master, so that some force is exerted on the subjects. This is how the wicked are subject to Christ, not that they desire His dominion, but because Christ will accomplish His will in their regard by punishing them, who refused to do His will here. And this is what is designated by the footstool, because whatever is tread upon is crushed: ‘Heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool’ (Is. 66:1).

83. – Another question concerns the statement, **until I make your enemies your footstool**, because if He sit *until* they are made his footstool, then when they are made his footstool, He will no longer sit. I answer that words as until or as long as are sometimes used finitely, namely, when they designate the end of that to which they are joined, as when I say, ‘Sit here till I come’; but sometimes they are used infinitely, when no end is mentioned, as when I say: ‘He did not repent as long as he lived’, because he did not repent even after death. For, as Jerome says, that would be designated about which there might be doubt, but that which is not in doubt is left to the one understanding. But there is doubt whether a person will repent in this life, but not so after death. So, too, in the present case: for since many now attack and blaspheme Christ, there is doubt whether He is sitting now, but there is not doubt that He will sit, when all things are subject to Him; therefore, it is not expressed.

84. – Then he shows that this dignity does not belong to the angels, when he says, **Are they not all ministering spirits?** Here he does three things: first, he indicated their function; secondly, the performance of that function (v. 14b); thirdly, the fruit of that performance (v. 14c).

85. – He says, therefore: **Are they not all ministering spirits?** ‘His ministers who do his will’ (Ps. 102:21). But Dan. (7:10) says: ‘Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him.’ Therefore, there are some who minister and some who stand about. Consequently, not all minister.

I answer that just as in the case of artifacts there are two kinds of artisans (for some work with their hands, and others do not, but oversee and direct what is to be done), so, too, with the angels, because

some carry out the divine commands, while others oversee and direct their performance. Therefore, if we take ministers in a broad sense to include both the executors and the directors, than all are ministers, inasmuch as the higher ones carry out God's will in regard the middle ones, and these in regard to the lower, and the lower in regard to us. But if those who perform are called ministers, while those who are immediately enlightened by God are called assistants, then some minister and some assist and direct the others.

86. – Therefore, the assistants are those who receive God's illumination directly from God Himself, and they receives names related to God, such as Seraphim, i.e., those who love God, Cherubim, those who know God, and Thrones, who carry. But the ministering spirits are those who receive from them and deliver to the others.

But this seems to be contrary to Gregory's statement that those who stand about are the ones who enjoy the beatific vision. Therefore, since all the angels see God's essence, according to Mt. (18:10): 'Their angels always see the face of my Father in heaven', it seems that all assist. I answer that one of the first scholars to study Dionysius' books strove to preserve both the Apostle's and Gregory's opinions and said that the lower angels do not see God fact to face, since they are not standing near. But this opinion is heretical, because, since happiness is made complete in the vision, it would follow that since the lower angels do not see God, they are not happy. Furthermore, the Lord Himself said: 'Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father' (Mt. 18:10). Therefore, it must be admitted that all see God's essence; just as God by knowing His essence also knows Himself and all things not Himself, so, too, the angels, seeing the essence of God, know it and all things in it. In this vision they are happy only because they see Him; not because they see other things in Him. Hence, Augustine says in the *Confessions*: 'Blessed is he that sees you, even if he does not see others. But he that sees you and other things in not any the happier for seeing the other things, but only for seeing you.' But the vision by which they see God's essence is common to the beatified. In the vision by which they know all other things in God one angel is above another, for the higher angels, being of a higher nature and intellect, see more in God than the intermediate do, and these more than the lowest. Hence, they see everything which pertains to their office and which are to be accomplished by the others. These things the lower angels do not see as perfectly; therefore, some apprise the others of their duties, and they alone stand about. Nevertheless, all see God. The sign of this, according to Dionysius is that to some angels who ask, God answers: 'I that speak justice'; but to the question: 'Who is king of glory'? The angels and not God answer: 'the Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory'. Thus, the function of the angels is clear.

87. – But this seems to be a description of the function they perform, when he says, **sent forth to serve**. Therefore, it seems that all are performers: 'The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him: and shall deliver them' (Ps. 33:8; Is 6:6): 'One of the seraphim flew to me.' But the seraphim belong to the highest order. Therefore, if they are sent, then *a fortiori* so are the others. But this is

contrary to Dionysius, who repeats what he received from the Apostle, namely, that only the lower angels are sent.

I answer that some say that the higher are sent and they depart when certain cases arise. But it seems to me that the four highest orders, namely, the Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones and Dominations are never sent, but the lower are sent. This is obvious from their names: for the Virtues are sent to work wonders; the Powers to restrain the ethereal powers. But the Dominations are so called, because they ordain all these lower ones. But the other three orders receive their name from the action they immediately perform in regard to God, and they dispense it to the others. Hence, if they are said to be sent, it is because there are two kinds of mission: one implies local motion, and this is the way the lower angels are sent; the other is the mission which involves the application and direction of a new effect in the creature, and this is the way the Son and the Holy Spirit are sent. It is also the way the higher angels are sent, because their power is sent to the lower ones to be sent to others. And if he says: ‘One of the seraphim flew to me’ (Is. 6:6), it is because the lower angels use the names of those by whose power and authority they act, and they attribute their actions to them. And because that lower angel performed his office in virtue of the Seraphim, he was called by the name of Seraphim, even though he was not by nature a seraph.

88. – Then he mentions the fruit of their activity when he says, **for the sake of those who are to receive [the inheritance of] salvation**. And although all are called, not all receive the inheritance. Therefore, the ones who do receive, obtain the fruit of the mission: ‘We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed’ (Jer. 51:9). Or again when he says, for them that **shall receive [the inheritance of] salvation**, the fruit of their performance is mentioned, which is that men receive the inheritance of salvation. For the purpose of their actions toward men is that the number of the elect be filled. And he says, for them, and not for all, because, although all are called, few are chosen, as it says in Mt. (22:14). He says, the inheritance, because only the sons obtain it: ‘But if sons, then heirs also’ (Rom. 8:17). He says, receive, because the kingdom of God is obtained by labor and sweat and solicitude: ‘The kingdom of God suffers violence’ (Mt. 11:12).

Therefore, they will be saved, who take care to guard the divine illuminations and inspirations impressed by the good angels and to make them fructify; otherwise, they will hear what said in Jer (51:9): ‘We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed.’

2-1

Heb 2:1-4

¹Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ²For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, ⁴while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

89. – After showing in a number of ways Christ's superiority over the angels, the Apostle here concludes that Christ's doctrine, namely, the New Testament, deserves more obedience than the Old Testament. In regard to this he does three things: first, he states the conclusion intended; secondly, he supports this conclusion with a reason (v. 2); thirdly, he confirms the consequence (v. 5).

90. – In regard to the first it should be noted that after giving the judicial and moral precepts of the Law in Ex. (chap. 25), He continues in verse 20: 'Behold, I shall send my angel, who shall go before you and shall bring you into the land;' and then adds, 'Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be condemned' (Ex. 23:21). Therefore, if the commandment of an angel, through whom the Law was delivered, is obeyed, they will enter heaven. Hence, it says in Mt. (19:17): 'If you will enter into life, keep the commandments.' Therefore it is necessary to keep those commandments of the Law; but much more to obey the commandments of Him Who is higher than the angels, through whom the Law was delivered. And this what he says, **therefore, we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard:** 'We have heard a rumor from the Lord' (Ob. 1:1); 'O Lord, I have heard your hearing and was afraid' (Heb. 3:1). Therefore, we ought to observe more closely for three reasons: first, because of the authority of the one speaking, for He is the Creator and the Son of God and not a creature of God's minister: 'We ought to obey God rather than men' (Ac. 5:29); secondly, because of the usefulness of the commands, for they are the words of eternal life: 'Lord, to whom shall go, you have the words of eternal life' (Jn. 6:69); others are words of temporal goods: 'If you would hear me, you would eat the good things of the earth' (Is. 1:19); thirdly, because of the sweetness of their observance, for they are sweet: 'His commandments are not heavy' (1 Jn. 5:3); 'My yoke is sweet and my burden light' (Mt. 11:30); 'This is a yoke which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear' (Ac. 15:10).

91. – Secondly, he shows the same thing from the threatening danger when he says, **lest we drift away from it**, i.e., be eternally damned. Here it should be noted that someone drifts away by bodily punishments: 'Like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth' (2 Sam. 14:14). He drifts away worse through guilt; but he drifts away worst by eternal damnation, because not a shard remains:

‘And it shall be broken small as the potter’s vessel, broken all to pieces with a mighty breaking, and there shall not a shard be found of the pieces thereof’ (Is. 30:14).

92. – Then he adduces the reason, which contains a conditional sentence with a comparison between the New and Old Testaments. In the antecedent is mentioned the condition of the Old Testament, and in the consequent the condition of the New Testament. In regard to the Old he mentions three things: first, the authority of the Law; secondly, the solidity of truth (v. 2b); thirdly, the necessity of obeying (v. 2c).

93. – First, he mentions the authority, because the Law was not delivered by human authority but by angels: ‘Being ordained by angels through the hand of a mediator’ (Gal. 2:19); This is he that was in the Church in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on mount Sion and with our fathers’ (Ac. 7:38). Nor is this strange, because, as Dionysius proves, the revelation of divine illuminations reach us through the medium of angels.

94. – He shows the firmness of the truth when he says, **was valid**, because everything foretold in the Old Law has been fulfilled: (Pr. 12:19) ‘The lip of truth shall be steadfast for ever;’ ‘Not one dot or one iota of the law shall pass away until all be fulfilled’ (Mt. 5:18); ‘The words that proceed from my mouth, I will not make void’ (Ps. 88:35). Therefore, it was made valid, because it was not made void.

95. – Then he shows the necessity of obeying, because the disobedient are punished: **and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution**. Here he mentions one thing which corresponds to a double guilt, namely, to the sin of omission and of transgression. The first corresponds to affirmative precepts; the other to negative precepts. The first is identified by the name, disobedience. But is disobedience a general sin? It seems so: for a sin is specific, because it has a special end. Hence, when someone does not obey a precept with the intention of scorning it, it is a special sin; but when there is another reason, say, concupiscence, then it is a condition following the sin, but it is not a special sin.

The other is called a transgression: ‘I have counted all the sinners of the earth prevaricators’ (Ps. 118:119). Then he mentions something on the part of the punishment: **received a just retribution**. For retribution depends on the amount of guilt, so that one who sins more gravely receives a greater punishment; but the wages depend on the quality, so that one who sins from the fires of lust will be punished with fire. There, he will receive a good wage for good acts and an evil wage for wicked actions. Consequently, retribution is received for good and for evil, inasmuch as it implies distributive justice. It is called just because of the equality of punishment, so that according to the amount of sin there is a certain amount of punishment.

96. – Then (v. 3) he places the consequent of his conditional, in which he describes the condition of the New Testament. Here he does three things: first, he shows the need to obey; secondly, the origin of the New Testament (v. 3b); thirdly, the firmness of its truth (v. 4).

97. – He says, therefore: **If the word spoken by angels punishes transgressors, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?** In this he denotes the danger which threatens those who do not obey. But above he called the Old Testament salvation. The reason for this is that a word is ordained to knowledge only; for this is what the Old Testament did, since by it there came knowledge of sin: ‘By the law is the knowledge of sin’ (Rom. 3:20). Also the knowledge of God: ‘He has not done in like manner to every nation’ (Ps. 75:2). But it did not confer grace, for grace is conferred in the New Testament: ‘Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ’ (Jn. 1:17), which leads to eternal salvation: ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’ (Jn. 6:69); ‘Your word is exceedingly refined’ (Ps. 118:140). Then he commends salvation, because it is so great. And certainly it is very great, if you consider the danger from which it frees us, because it frees us not only from the dangers of bodily death but of spiritual: ‘He will save his people from their sins’ (Mt. 1:21). It is also great, because it is universal, i.e., not confined to one nation or to one danger, but it is for all men and from all enemies: ‘He is the savior of all men, but especially of the faithful’ (1 Tim. 4:10); ‘That being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve him without fear’ (Lk. 1:74). It is also great, because it is eternal: ‘Israel is saved in the Lord with an eternal salvation’ (Is. 45:17). Therefore, it should not be neglected, but we should be careful to obtain it: ‘We have seen the land which is exceedingly rich and fruitful’ (Jg. 18:9); then he continues: ‘Neglect not; lose no time; let us go and possess it: there will be no difficulty’ (Jg. 18:9) And of course we should not neglect it, because if we are negligent, we shall be punished not only by losing what is good but also by incurring evil, namely, eternal damnation, which we shall not be able to escape.’ Hence, he said, How shall we escape? ‘Who has shown you to flee the wrath to come’ (Mt. 3:7)? ‘The way to escape shall fail them’ (Jb. 11:20); ‘Wither shall I go from your spirit; or whither shall I flee from your face’ (Ps. 138:7)?

98. – Then (v. 3b) he shows the origin of the doctrine of the New Testament. Here he mentions a double origin: first of all, that it came not by angels but by Christ: ‘He has spoken to us in his Son’ (Heb. 1:2); ‘The only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him’ (Jn. 1:18). Hence, he says, **it was declared at first by the Lord**, because it has two beginnings: one is absolute and from all eternity; and this is through the Word: ‘He chose us in him before the foundation of the world’ (Eph. 1:4). The other is the beginning of the declaration, and this occurs in time through the Incarnate Word. The second origin was through the apostles, who head from Christ; hence, he says, **was attested to us by them that heard him**, i.e., by its preachers: ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen, we declare unto you’ (1 Jn. 1:1); ‘Who from the beginning were eyewitnesses’ (Lk. 1:2).

99. – Then he mentions its solidity, which is greater than that of the Old Testament, as God testifies, Who cannot lie; hence he says, **while God also bore witness by signs and wonders**. But it should be noted that testimony is made by speech, which is a sense-perceptible sign. But God gave testimony with two sense-perceptible signs, namely, by miracles and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In regard to the first he says, **while God bore witness by signs** as to lesser miracles, such as healing a fever or curing a lame

person (Ac. 3) **and wonders**, as to greater miracles, such as the raising of the dead: ‘Tabitha, arise’ (Ac. 9:40). But the greatest wonder was that God became man: ‘Behold, I and my children whom the Lord has given me for a sign’ (Is. 8:18), namely, that I who am a man and my children should believe this. For it was a marvel that the human heart should believe this. He said, **by various miracles**, so that signs and wonders refer to acts which exceed the power of nature, namely, a sign would be something beyond and above nature, though not contrary to it; while a wonder is something contrary to nature, as the raising of the dead.

In regard to the second, i.e., the gifts, he says, **and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will**. This seems to be contrary to Wis. (7:27): ‘The spirit is one’ how is he distributed. The answer is that He is not distributed as to His essence, but as to His gifts: ‘There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit’ (1 Cor. 12:4). For all gifts are attributed to the Holy Spirit, because they proceed from love, which is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, as Gregory says: ‘Truly the Holy Spirit is love.’

Heb 2:5-8

⁵For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶It has been testified somewhere, “What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels, you have crowned him with glory and honor, ⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet.” Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

100. – Having made a comparison to show that it is more necessary to observe the commandments of Christ than those of the Law delivered by angels, the Apostle now confirms the consequence. First, he confirms this consequence by showing that Christ’s power is greater than that of the angels; secondly, he proves this on the authority of Scripture (v. 6).

101. – He says, therefore, that they will undergo severer punishments who act against Christ’s commandments than those who act against the commandments of angels, because Christ is Lord, and a person who offends his Lord is punished more than one who sins against a servant. That Christ is Lord is shown by the fact that God has not subjected the earth to angels but to Christ. He does two things: first, he shows that the earth is not subject to angels; secondly, he shows which earth he means (v. 5c).

102. – The earth is not subject to angels: ‘What other has he appointed over the earth, or whom has he set over the world he made’ (Jb. 34:13)? But Daniel (chap. 10) says that an angel was the prince of the Greeks and of the Persians, and in Dt. (32:8) it says: ‘He appointed the bounds of people according to the number of the children of Israel.’ But it should be noted that they are not subject to them as to a lord, but as to a vicegerent: for all visible creation is administered by angels: ‘His ministers who do his will’ (Ps. 102:21).

Or, **it was not to angels that God has subjected the world to come**, i.e., that world which is to come, because in Scripture something is described as coming, not in relation to us but in relation to that to which it is compared, as the Apostle says of Adam in relation to Christ: ‘Who is the form of the future’, (Rom. 5:14), for Christ is not future in relation to Himself, but in relation to Adam. So, here, this earth is said to come not in relation to us but in relation to Christ, Who exists from all eternity, whereas the earth exists in time.

103. – And because the Manicheans say that the earth is subject to an evil god and not to the good God, he adds, **of which we speak**, namely not of some other world, but of this one; or because he had said above, they shall perish, namely, the heavens, and they shall be changed, which, as was explained there,

is understood of the state but not of the substance of the world Hence, there are two states of the world: one is its present state: 'But the heavens and the earth which are not, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment' (2 Pt. 3:7); the other is its future state. But in the world which now exists not all things are subject to Him as far as the execution of His power is concerned, although they are subject to His authority; but in that future state the earth will be subject to Him; hence, he says, of which we speak.

104. – Then he proves by an authority, when he says, **it has been testified somewhere**. Here he does three things: first, he commends the value of the testimony to be adduced; secondly, he adduces it (v. 6b); thirdly, he explains the meaning of the testimony (v. 8b).

105. – In regard to the testimony he states first that the words of the Old Testament are witnesses to Christ: 'Search the Scriptures: the same are they that give testimony of me' (Jn. 5:39). Therefore, he says, **for it has been testified somewhere**. Secondly, because among the Jews there were some writings less known and some better known, the Scriptures of the Psalms are of greater value than those they used in all their sacrifices; hence, he says, somewhere, known and manifest. Thirdly, he gives the authority of the speaker, namely, David, who enjoyed the greatest authority: 'The man to whom it was appointed concerning the Christ of the God of Jacob, the excellent Psalmist of Israel said' (2 Sam. 23:1).

106. – Then he adduces the authority (v. 6b). Here he does three things: first, he hints at the mystery of the Incarnation; secondly, of the Passion (v. 7); thirdly, the mystery of the exaltation (v. 7b). In regard to the first he touches on two things: first, the cause of the Incarnation; secondly, the Incarnation itself (v. 6c).

107. – But the cause of the Incarnation is God's care of man. Therefore, he says: **What is man?** as though in contempt. As if to say: Man is so unimportant when compared to God: 'All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity' (Is. 40:17). For if a person loves another and leaves him in wretchedness for a long time, he seems to have forgotten. But God loved the human race, both because He made it according to His own image and because He placed man in the midst of paradise. But after sin, because He did not come to his aid immediately, He seems to have forgotten. But later he seems to have become mindful of him, when He sends a Redeemer: 'Remember us, O Lord, in the favor of your people; visit us with your salvation' (Ps. 105:4). Therefore, he says, **What is man that you are mindful of him?** As if to say: If we consider man's vileness, it is strange that You should be mindful of him who is so vile and so small. I say vile and small in nature, especially in regard to his substance: 'God formed man from the slime of the earth (Gen. 2:7); 'And now, O Lord, you are our Father and we are clay' (Is. 64:8).

Vile in his sins; hence, Augustine says on John: 'Men accomplish nothing when they sin;' 'Behold, I have made you small among the nations, you are exceedingly contemptible' (Ob 1:2). Vile and

weak in his punishment: 'Man born of a woman, living for a time is filled with many miseries' (Jb. 14:1); 'Who shall raise up Jacob, for he is very little' (Am 7:5).

108. – Secondly, he mentions the Incarnation when he says, **the son of man**. Here it should be noted that in Sacred Scripture Christ is called the Son of man, as is clear from Daniel and from the Gospel. The reason for this is that others are sons of men: 'O you sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart?' (Ps. 4:3); but Christ alone is the son of man, namely, of the Blessed Virgin, and He is visited by God. Sometimes in Scripture a visitation refers to a benefit, as when 'the Lord visited Sarah as He had promised and fulfilled what He spoke' (Gen. 21:1). Sometimes it refers to a punishment: 'I will visit their iniquities with a rod' (Ps. 88:33). But here it refers to the benefit: You care for [visit] i.e., confer a most excellent gift on man, because you make him a son of God, when His humanity is assumed by the Word. Or he says this because of Christ's fullness: 'Full of grace and truth' (Jn. 1:14). Or both can be referred to Christ, so that the sense is this: You were mindful of him in the Incarnation, when humanity was assumed by Christ, but you visit him in the resurrection. Or both should be referred to the human race. But every son of man is a man, although not every man is a son of a man. For Adam was not a son of man. A man, therefore, is one who bears the image of the earthly man, namely, of Adam; and this man is called a sinner; but a son of man is one who bears the image of the heavenly man, namely Christ, Who is called the Son of man: 'Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly' (1 Cor. 15:49). Man, therefore, is called a sinner; and because he is far from God, 'for salvation is far from sinners' (Ps. 118:155), God is said to be mindful of him, as a man is mindful of one far away. But when he is changed from sinner to just, the son of man is visited by grace: 'Your visitation has guarded my spirit' (Jb. 10:12).

109. – Then (v. 7) he mentions the mystery of the Passion. Here it should be noted that in the order of nature corruptible things are lower than incorruptible things. But angels are incorruptible and immortal according to their nature; hence, when Christ deigned to suffer and undergo death He was made a little less than they: not that He had lost His fullness or was diminished in any way, but because He joined our smallness to Him self. This was signified in Lk. (22:4): 'There appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him', not because He needed him, but to show that He was less than they by suffering. He says, **little less**, for two reasons: first because every bodily creature is slight when compared with the rational, because bodily things are confined within the fixed limits of their quantity, but not rational things, which can grow and grown in intelligence. But Christ was made less than the angels, not in regard to his divinity nor in regard to His soul, but in regard to His body. Therefore, he said, **a little less**, i.e., quantitatively. Secondly, he is a little less according to duration, because He lasted a short time: 'For a small moment have I forsaken you' (Is. 54:7).

110. – Nor is it strange, if He was made less than the angels in his suffering body, since in this respect He was made less than man: 'I am a worm and not a man' (Ps. 21:7), and this because of His shameful death:

‘Let us condemn him to a most shameful death’ (Wis. 2:20). But if the question, **What is man that you are mindful of him?** is referred to man, then man is said to be a little less not in regard to the kind of knowledge, because both man and angel share the same kind of knowledge, but according to the manner, because the angels know in a more excellent way than men. Secondly, as to the body, because, although an angel and a soul are of one nature, namely, intellectual, nevertheless, the soul is united to a body; but even in this he is a little less, because the dignity of the soul is not destroyed by this union, but it is dulled and impeded from higher contemplation: ‘The corruptible body is a load upon the soul’ (Wis. 9:15). Thirdly, as to gifts; and in this respect man is a little less not as to gratuitous gifts, in which ‘they will be as the angels in heaven’ (Mt. 22:30), but as to natural gifts.

111. – Then (v. 7b) he presents the mystery of exaltation. Here he does three things: first, he shows its glory; secondly, the honor (v. 7c); thirdly, the power (v. 8).

‘The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and benediction; and every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea’ (Rev. 5:12).

112. – He says, therefore, **You have crowned him with glory**, i.e., with brightness: for glory implies brightness. But Christ was crowned with a double glory, namely, with the glory of the body: ‘Who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory’ (Phil. 3:2). This glory is promised Him in Jn (12:18): ‘I have both glorified it, namely, your soul, by filling it with the splendors of grace, and will glorify it again’, namely, the body with the glory of immortality.’ Another brightness comes from the confession of all people: ‘Every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father’ (Phil. 2:11); ‘Glory and great beauty shall you lay upon him’ (Ps. 20:6).

113. – Then (v. 7b) he shows His honor. Now honor differs from glory as effect from cause: for honor is reverence shown in view of some excellence; hence, it is a testification of one’s goodness. But that honor consists in every creature’s revering Him as the Father is revered: ‘That all men may honor the Son as they honor the Father’ (Jn. 5:23). he says, **crowned**, namely, as a sign of victory, because a crown is given to a victor: ‘They, indeed, that they may receive a perishable crown: but we an imperishable one’ (1 Cor. 9:25); ‘He is not crowned, except he strive lawfully’ (2 Tim. 2:5). But Christ won this crown by the struggle of His Passion: ‘He was made obedient unto death: for which cause God also has exalted him and given him a name which is above every name’ (Phil. 2:8). But things which belong to Christ as God are not a reward but are natural to Him; yet inasmuch as He is man, they are the reward for the victory of his Passion.

114. – Then he shows His power: first, as to its authority; secondly, as to its effect (v. 8).

115. – In regard to the first he says: **You have set him over the works of your hands**. This can be taken in three ways: in one way, as meaning that He was set over all places; and this in the Ascension: ‘He ascended above all the heavens’ (Eph. 4:10); secondly, over all dignities: ‘Setting him on his right hand above all principality and power and virtue and dominion’ (Eph. 1:21); thirdly, over all power, because He is set above every creature: ‘all power is given to me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18). But Christ as God is not appointed but born; yet He is appointed as man: Whom he appointed heir of all things (above 1:2).

116. – The effect of His power is that all things are subject to him [under his feet]. The prophet uses the past for the future because of His authority, for it has already taken place in God’s eternal predestination. He says, **under his feet**, i.e., under His humanity or with all subjection: ‘Till I make your enemies your footstool’ (Ps. 109:1).

117^a. – That is, under His humanity: for just as the head of Christ is God, so by the feet of Christ is understood his humanity: ‘We shall adore in the place where his feet stood’ (Ps. 131:7).

117^b. – But if it is understood that way, then man is said to be crowned with glory as to intellectual knowledge, in which he excels the other animals: ‘The man, indeed, ought not to cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God’ (1 Cor. 11:7); ‘Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth’ (Jb. 35:11). He is crowned with honor, inasmuch as he along of all the animals is master of his own actions and is not subject to the necessity of changeable things in regard to his soul, because he has free will. He is crowned with power, because you have set him over all your works: ‘Let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air and the beasts and the whole earth’ (Gen. 1:26).

118. – Then (v. 8) he explains the meaning of the testimony. Here he does two things: first, he explains it as to His sublimity; secondly, as to His diminution (v. 9). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows how the prophet’s statement is to be understood; secondly, that it has not yet been fulfilled (v. 8b).

119. – Therefore, (v. 8a) he shows how the statement is to be understood. For since Scripture says that all things have been subjected to Christ, there is nothing outside his control. Hence, the all is not limited to certain genera, but applies absolutely to all, because all are generally and universally subject to Him.

But then Arius argues: The Father has subjected all things to the Son; therefore, the Son is inferior to the Father. I answer that it is true that the Father subjected all things to the Son according to His human nature, in which He is inferior to the Father: ‘The Father is greater than I (Jn. 14:28); but according to the divine nature Christ Himself subjected all things to Himself.

120. – Then when he says, **as it is, we do not yet see all things subject to Him**, he shows that this has not yet been fulfilled, because unbelievers, sinners and devils are not yet subject to Him: ‘But not all obey

the Gospel' (Rom. 10:16); 'How long do you refuse to submit to me?' (Ex. 10:3). Consequently, sinners are not subject to Christ by reason of their rebellious wills; but in regard to his power all are subject to Him: now in regard to its authority, but later in regard to obedience.

Hence, this is an explanation of the phrase, the world to come (v. 5).

Heb 2:9-13

⁹But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one. ¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹²saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.” ¹³And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

121. – Above, the Apostle, desiring to prove Christ’s eminence over the angels, relied on the authority of a prophet who said something pertaining to Christ’s dignity, such as, ‘you put everything in subjection under his feet’, and something pertaining to His Passion, namely, ‘you have made him a little less than the angels’. But this seems to militate against his chief intention, which is to prefer Christ over the angels. Consequently, he explains this more fully in this section, where he does three things: first, he shows in what sense that lessening is to be understood; secondly, he describes the suitability of the Passion (v. 10). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he explains a statement he made; secondly, he describes the Passion (v. 9b).

122. – He said therefore: **What is man that you are mindful of him? You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have subjected all things under his feet. You have made him a little lower than the angels.** These are the things the prophet predicted of Christ, and already we see many of them fulfilled. Hence, it is certain that the rest will be fulfilled, namely, that all things will be subjected under his feet. ‘The accomplishments of the past give assurance for the future’ (Gregory). Then he continues, **but we see Jesus, who for a little while, was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor for suffering death**, which was the cause of His exaltation: ‘For which cause God also exalted him’ (Phil. 2:9). He says, **of death**, because He did not endure just any death, but the bitterest and most shameful: ‘Let us condemn him to a most shameful death’ (Wis. 2:20). Or, another way: **We see Jesus**, and when asked Who He is, answers: He Who by suffering death was made a little lower than the angels and then crowned with honor and glory. This lessening was due only to His suffering of death. Nor is this strange, because in this respect He is not only lower than the angels, but lower than men: ‘Despised and the most abject of men’ (Is. 53:2). A Gloss of Augustine against Maximus says that Christ was made a little lower than the angels, not because of a condition of His nature but because of the Passion. For as to the nature of the human mind, which Christ assumed without sin, nothing is greater but the Trinity alone. In body He is less than the angels, because He suffered in his body.

But this seems to be contrary to Dionysius, who says that angels are greater than men by reason of their natural participation in light. The answer is that we can speak two ways about the nature of the human mind and the angelic mind: in one way, according to what is natural, and then the angelic mind is more excellent and more noble than the nature of the human mind, because an angel receives knowledge of divine truth in a more excellent and fuller intellectual light, but man from creatures. In another way, we can consider the nature of each without sin in relation to happiness; they are then equal: 'They will be as the angels in heaven' (Mt. 22:30). Yet by reason of His excellent grace Christ in His human nature is greater than the angels. Consequently, His lessening is not in relation to the nature of His divinity nor absolutely according to His human nature, but in the sense that He suffered according to it. But we can say that Christ was crowned with a triple glory, namely, with the glory of holiness, which He had in the first instant of His conception; secondly, with the glory of the beatific vision, because from the first instant of His conception He possessed it; thirdly, with the glory of incorruptibility, which He merited after the Passion.

123. – Then (v. 9b) he describes Christ's Passion from three viewpoints: first, from its cause; secondly, from its utility; thirdly from the manner.

124. – Only God's grace was the cause, for that alone led Him to give His only begotten Son: 'God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son' (Jn. 3:16); 'But God commends his charity toward us, when as yet we were sinners according to the time Christ died for us' (Rom. 5:8). Or, according to a Gloss of Augustine, that the grace of God, i.e., Christ Himself, Who is the grace of God, might taste death for all. Here grace is in the nominative case. But Christ is called grace because He is the author of grace: 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (Jn. 1:17). Or, because He is given freely: 'A son has been given to us' (Is. 9:6). Then the sense is this: He was made a little lower in order that He Who is the grace of God might taste death for all.

125. – **For all**: behold the usefulness. But **for all** can be understood in two ways: first, as applying to all the predestined, since it is only in the predestined that it is efficacious. Secondly, as applying absolutely to all so far as sufficiency is concerned; for of itself it is sufficient for all: 'Who is the savior of all, but especially of the faithful' (1 Tim. 4:10); 'He died for all in general, because the price was sufficient for all. And if all do not believe, he nevertheless fulfilled His part' (Chrysostom).

126. – **Might taste**: behold the manner. For a person who has not eaten or drunk much is said to have tasted. Therefore, because Christ did not continue in death but rose at once, He tasted death: 'He shall drink of the torrent in the way' (Ps. 109:7). One who is on the way hurries. Furthermore, taste is a discernor of flavor; hence one who tastes discerns more than one who drinks. Therefore, to indicate that He tasted death and pain, and that His death was not imaginary, as Mani and Apollinaris claim, he says, that he might taste death: 'O, all you that pass by the way, attend and see, if there be any sorrow like to

my sorrow' (Lam. 1:12). But the manner is mentioned when he says, **taste**. Matthew (26:39) says the same thing: 'If it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.' He says this for two reasons: first, to express the bitterness of death, which is experienced by taste: 'O, all you that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow' (Lam 1:12); 'The drink shall be bitter to them that drink it' (Is. 24:9); secondly, because just as tasting or not tasting lie in the power of the taster, so also the Passion of Christ was voluntary: 'I have the power to lay down my life' (Jn. 10:18).

127. – Then (v. 10) he shows the suitability from its usefulness. For God the Father is the cause of Christ's death, since He is the One by whom all things exist as by an efficient cause, and for whom all things exist, as for a final cause. All things are for Him, because they are for communicating His goodness: and this was the cause inducing Him to produce things, and thus all things are finally for God: 'The Lord has made all things for himself' (Pr. 16:4). But effectively, all things are by Him: 'Who made heaven and the sea and all things in it' (Ps. 145:6); 'I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end' (Rev. 1:8). 'Of him and by him and in him are all things' (Rom. 11:36). Therefore, it became Him as the author of all things to provide for all: 'He has equally cared for all' (Wis. 6:8). Secondly, it was fitting on the part of the cause, which, as has been stated, was the grace of God. But grace is ordained to glory: 'The grace of God, life everlasting' (Rom. 6:23). But God from all eternity predestined those whom He would lead to glory, i.e., all those who are adopted sons of God, because 'if sons, heirs also' (Rom. 8:17). Therefore, he says, **who had brought many sons to glory**. As if to say: He has one perfect Son naturally: 'Therefore, having yet one son most dear to him' (Mk 12:6); but the others are adopted and, therefore, must be brought into glory. Hence, he says: **who had brought**, i.e., foreordained them to be brought.

128. – And what was fitting for Him? This, namely, that he **should make perfect the pioneer of their salvation**, which consists in two things, namely, that they become sons and be brought into their inheritance. That they are sons they owe to the natural Son: 'Whom he foreknew he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his son' (Rom. 8:29). But they obtain glory and the inheritance only through Him Whose inheritance it is by right and Who is the brightness of glory. Therefore, because we obtain those two things through the Son, He is fittingly called the pioneer of salvation: 'He will save his people from their sins' (Mt. 1:21); 'Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith' (Heb. 12:12). Therefore it was fitting that the Father send the author of salvation, namely, His Son, Who had brought many sons into glory.

To be perfected through suffering, i.e., by merit. For He, as the natural Son, is altogether perfect, but because He was lessened in the Passion He had to be made perfect by the merit of the Passion: 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory' (Lk. 24:26)?

129. – Then (v. 11) he proves what he had said. Here he does two things: first, he proves his conclusion on the part of the Father sanctifying; secondly, on the part of the Son sanctified (v. 14). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states his conclusion; secondly, he proves it by an authority (v. 11b).

130. – He says, therefore: **For both he that sanctifies and they that are sanctified have one origin.** But it should be noted that the Apostle had said three things above: first, that Christ is the cause of salvation, in which he shows that we depend on Him as on a Savior; secondly, he shows that the Father is the finisher of Christ by the merit of the Passion, so that in this, Christ depends on the Father; thirdly, that the Father brings us into glory, which also shows that we depend on God. Accordingly, the Apostle does three things here: first he shows that we depend on Christ, for the one sanctified depends on the sanctifier: ‘Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate’ (Heb. 13:12). Therefore, it has been well said that because He is the author and sanctifier, we depend on him; but He depends on the Father, from Whom He has power to sanctify; which is the second. But all, namely, He that sanctifies and we who are sanctified, have one origin, namely, of the Father; this is the third: ‘Heirs of God; co-heirs with Christ’ (Rom. 8:17).

131. – Then he proves there points with three authorities: first, that Christ, as the mediator and author of salvation, brings God’s gifts to us; hence, he says, **that is why**, namely, because He and we depend on the Father, **he is not ashamed to call them brethren**, because all are of the same Father: ‘Have we not all one Father’ (Mal 2:10); ‘That he might be the firstborn among many brethren’ (Rom. 8:29). Therefore, it is stated in Ps. 21 (v. 23): ‘I will declare your name to my brethren;’ ‘Go to my brethren’ (Jn. 20:17).

But note that he says, **he is not ashamed to call them brethren**, because some born of an ignoble race are ashamed to recognize their brethren, if they are promoted: ‘The brethren of a poor man hate him’ (Pr. 19:7). But not Christ, for He says, **I will proclaim your name to my brethren**: ‘Father, I have manifested your name to the men whom you have given me’ (Jn. 17:6); ‘The only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him’ (Jn. 1:18).

132. – Then he shows the fruit of this manifestation when he says, **in the midst of the congregation will I praise you.** As if to say: This forms a great Church in the midst of which I will praise you. He says, **in the midst**, because just as a pillar in the midst of a house supports it and a lamp in the midst of a house gives light and the heart in the midst of the body gives life, so Christ is in the midst of the Church. Furthermore, **in the midst**, because He was not sent to one people, as Moses was: ‘In Judea God is known; his name is great in Israel’ (Ps. 75:2), but He was sent for the salvation of all: ‘He has wrought salvation in the midst of the earth’ (Ps. 73:12). Therefore, it is stated in Lk (24:36) that Jesus stood in the midst of His disciples.

On this point it should be noted that before the Law it was the custom that all the firstborn were priests, and this pertained to the right of primogeniture. But Christ is a brother and firstborn; therefore, He is a priest. But a priest who sanctifies the people is a mediator between God and the people: ‘I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you at that time’ (Dt. 5:5). Therefore, it pertains to him to announce the things of God to the people and to bring the things of the people to God. He does the first by preaching; hence, he says, **I will proclaim your name to my brethren**, i.e., I will bring them to know

you, and this to sanctify them: ‘Sanctify them in the truth’ (Jn. 17:17). The second He accomplishes by doing, when He makes men burst forth in praise of God. Hence, he says, **in the midst of the congregation will I praise you.**

133. – Then when he says, **and again**, he shows that Christ Himself depends on the Father by the fact that He says, **I will put my trust in him**: ‘In you, Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded’ (Ps. 30:2). But he shows the kind of hope He has, namely, firm hope, which is called trust: for hope, even though it is not concerned with the impossible, sometimes has fear joined to it, and then it is properly called hope. But sometimes hope is firm and without fear; then it is called trust. This is the hope Christ had.

134. – He says, therefore, **I will put my trust in him**, i.e., I will have confidence in His help.

But the saints say that in Christ there is neither faith nor hope, but only charity. I answer that hope is one thing and trust another: for hope is the expectation of future happiness; and this was not in Christ, because He was happy from the instant of His conception. But trust is the expectation of help, and in regard to this there was hope in Christ, inasmuch as He awaited help from the Father during His Passion. Therefore, whenever we read that Christ had hope, this is not to be understood as referring to its principal, which is happiness, but as referring to the glory of the resurrection and of the glory conferred on His body.

135. – Then when he repeats, **and again**, he shows that we depend on the Father: **Here am I and the children whom God has given me**: ‘Yours they were and to me you gave them’ (Jn. 17:6); ‘Children, have you any fish’ (Jn. 21:5)? They are called children on account of their purity: ‘If the young men be clean especially from women’ (1 Sam. 21:4); and a bit later he continues: ‘The vessels of the young men were holy.’ They are called children because of their purity: ‘Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts’ (Is. 8:18). Also on account of their simplicity: ‘Brethren do not become children in sense: but in malice be children’ (1 Cor. 14:20); also because of their humility: ‘unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt. 18:3). He shows that not only is He from God, but also the children; hence he continues, **whom God has given me**. This shows that **both he that sanctifies and they that are sanctified have all one origin**, because it says in Jn (6:44): ‘No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draw him.’

Heb 2:14-18

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. ¹⁶For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

136. – Having shown the suitability of Christ's death from the standpoint of the Father causing it, the Apostle now shows the same thing from the standpoint of Christ enduring it. Therefore, he intends to show how He was made the author of salvation by his Passion: first, he shows the condition of the nature through which He could suffer and die; secondly, the benefits He obtained by dying (v. 14b); thirdly, he proves what he had proposed (v. 16).

137. – He says, therefore, I have said that He and the children have all one origin and that He called them brethren. Consequently, it was fitting that He be like them, not only because He confers on them a participation in the divine nature, which is from grace, but also because He assumed their nature. Hence, he says, therefore, **because the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature.**

138. – Here it should be noted that by the name **flesh and blood** is sometimes understood the nature of flesh and blood: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh' (Gen. 2:23); then by flesh is understood the body: 'You have clothed me with skin and flesh' (Jb. 10:11) and by blood the soul: not as though the soul were blood, but because it is not preserved in the body without blood. Sometimes by flesh and blood are understood the vices of flesh and blood: 'Flesh and blood have not revealed it to you' (Mt. 16:17). But sometimes they signify the corruptibility of flesh and blood: 'Flesh and blood shall not possess the kingdom of God, not corruption incorruption' (1 Cor. 15:50). But here it does not refer to vices, for Christ assumed a nature without sin, but with the possibility of suffering, because He assumed a flesh similar to the sinner: 'In the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8:3). Therefore, like the children, He is partaker of flesh and blood, and all in the same way: for it was not imaginary flesh, as the Manicheans say, nor was it assumed in the accidental way, as Nestorius said. But true flesh and blood, such as children have, were assumed into the unity of the person.

139. – That Christ is a partaker of flesh and blood is not to be understood as referring to the vices of flesh and blood, because He did not take on sin or commit any; but as referring to the very substance of animated flesh, because He assumed flesh and soul. It also included the possibility of suffering, because He assumed our nature capable of suffering. Therefore, the sense is: **Because the children**, i.e., the faithful, has a nature capable of suffering, Christ Himself partook of the same, i.e., of flesh and blood. But we partake of them through our person; and Christ in like manner assumed them to His person: ‘The Word was made flesh’ (Jn. 1:14). By flesh and blood can also be understood the flesh and blood of Christ according to the statement: ‘He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood’ (Jn. 6:55), of which the children, i.e., the apostles, partook at the last supper and of which Christ partook: ‘He drank His own blood’, as Chrysostom says.

140. – Then (v. 14b) he shows the benefits His death brought. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows its usefulness on the part of the devil, who had the power; secondly, on our part who were held (v. 15).

141. – He says, therefore: **He partook** of flesh and blood, i.e., He assumed a nature in which He could suffer and die, which he could not do in the divine nature, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, i.e., the devil. But how does the devil have the power of death? For this is God’s prerogative: ‘The Lord kills and makes alive’ (1 Sam. 2:6); ‘I will kill and I will make to live’ (Dt. 32:39). I answer that a judge has the power of death in one way, because he inflicts death, when he punishes with death; but a thief has it another way in the sense of deserving death because of demerit. God has the power of death in the first way: For in what day you shall eat of it, you shall die the death’ (Gen. 2:17). But the devil in the second way, because by persuading men to sin, he yielded him over to death: ‘by the envy of the devil, death came into the world’ (Wis. 2:24).

But he says, **that he might destroy him**, not as to his substance, which is indestructible, nor as to his malice, so that the devil would become good at some time, but as to his power: ‘Despoiling the principalities and powers’ (Col. 2:15).

142. – This was accomplished by the death of Christ in three ways: first, on the part of Christ, for the true nature of justice is that the victor subject the vanquished to himself: ‘For by whom a man is overcome, of the same is he the slave’ (2 Pt. 2:19). But Christ overcame the devil: ‘The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed’ (Rev. 5:5). Therefore, it is just that the devil be subject to Him: ‘When a strong man armed keeps his court, those things are in peace which he possesses (Lk. 11:21). Secondly, on the part of the devil: for justice requires that a person who unjustly uses power granted him should lose it. But the devil has been given power over the sinners he seduced, but not over the good. Therefore, because he presumed to extend this power even to Christ, Who did not sin: ‘The prince of this world comes, and in me he has nothing’ (Jn. 14:30), he deserved to lose it. The third reason is on our part: for it is just that the vanquished be the servants of the victor. But man by sin was the servant of the devil: ‘Whoever commits

sin is the servant of sin' (Jn. 8:34); consequently, he was subject to the devil and liable to sin. But Christ paid the price for our sin: 'Then did I pay that which I took not away' (Ps. 68:5). Therefore, when the cause of servitude was taken away, man was set free by Christ.

143. – But it should be noted that another satisfaction was suitable. For man was in debt; but one man can satisfy for another out of charity, although no one can satisfy for the entire human race, because he does not have power over it, nor could the entire human race satisfy sufficiently, because it was entirely subject to sin; nor could an angel, because this satisfaction was unto glory, which exceeds the power of an angel. Therefore, it was necessary that the one who satisfied be man and God, Who alone has power over the whole human race. By the death of God and man, therefore, He destroyed him who had the empire of death.

144. – Then (v. 15) another advantage on our part is mentioned. In regard to this it should be noted that a man is a servant of sin to the extent that he is induced to sin. But the most effective inducements to sin are the love of transitory goods and the fear of present punishments: 'Things set on fire, as to the first and dug down as to the second, shall perish at the rebuke of your countenance' (Ps. 79:17). But these two amount to the same thing, because the more a person loves something, the more he fears its evil contrary. Hence, we see that savage beasts are kept from the greatest pleasures through fear of punishment; thus fear makes cowards of us all. Hence, if a man overcomes his fears, he overcomes everything; and when fear is overcome, all disordered love of the world is overcome. Thus Christ by His death broke this fear, because He removed the fear of death, and, consequently the love of the present life. For when a person considers that the Son of God, the Lord of death, willed to die, he no longer fears death. That is why before the death of Christ, it was said: 'O death, how bitter is the remembrance of you' (Sir. 41:1); but after Christ's death the Apostle expresses a desire to be dissolved and be with Christ: Hence, we are told: 'Fear not them that kill the body' (Mt. 10:28).

He says, therefore, **and deliver all those who through the fear of death were subject to lifelong service**, namely, the servitude of sin.

145. – But Christ freed us from a double servitude, namely, that of the Law and that of sin, since the law is called a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear (Ac. 15:10). Now the difference between the Old and the New Law is fear and love. In the New there is love: 'If you love me, keep my commandments' (Jn. 14:15). But the Old was the law of fear: 'You have not received the spirit of servitude again in fear' (Rom. 8:15). Therefore, he sways, and deliver them who through the fear of bodily death, which the Law inflicted, were all subject to lifelong servitude.

146. – But why did He not free us at once from death but only from the fear of death? I answer that He freed us immediately from the cause of death, but not from death itself, although He freed us from the fear of death. The reason for this was that if he had freed us from bodily death, men would serve Christ

only for their bodily good, and then the merit of faith and hope would be destroyed. Furthermore, bodily evils enable us to merit eternal life: 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God' (Ac. 14:21).

It should be noted that He freed us from the fear of death, first of all, by showing the immortality that awaited us. As a result, man could scorn temporal death: Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep' (1 Cor. 15:20); secondly, by giving us a foretaste of death He made us more ready to undergo death for Christ: 'Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example' (1 Pt. 2:2). Thirdly, by opening the gate to glory, which was closed before His death; as a result, we not only do not fear death, but we desire it: 'Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is much better' (Phil. 1:23).

147. – Then (v. 16) the Apostle proves the benefits which Christ's death obtained. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows that by His death Christ freed us by reason of the condition of the nature he assumed; secondly, he concludes a likeness (v. 17); thirdly, he shows the benefit of the likeness (v. 17b).

148. – He says, therefore: So I have stated that Christ by His death freed us from sin and death. Nor is there any doubt that in regard to the condition of its nature an angel is greater than man; but because the angels were not subject to servitude or deserving of death, He did not assume an angel. But if he had, this would have been on account of the dignity of its nature. But we have never read that he assumed an angel, but only of the seed of Abraham, i.e., a human nature, not in the abstract but in an individual, and from the seed of Abraham. He adds this in order that the Jews, who glory in being of the seed of Abraham, might venerate Christ more. But he says significantly [take hold of], because that is properly said to be taken hold of, which flees. But not only the human nature fled from God, but also the children of Abraham: 'But they would not hearken, and they turned away the shoulder to depart; and they stopped their ears not to hear' (Zech. 7:11). This taking hold of human nature unto the unity of the person of the Son of God exalts our nature beyond measure. Hence, Chrysostom says: 'It is a great and marvelous thing for our flesh to be seated above and to be adorned by angels and archangels. As I turn this over in my mind, I experience excessive joy, imagining great things about the human race.'

149. – But it would have seemed better to assume an angelic nature than a human nature. For likeness is the reason making the Incarnation of a divine person becoming. But a more express likeness of God is found in the angelic nature than in the human, because the former is the seal of resemblance. Therefore, it would seem more fitting to take hold of an angel than of the seed of Abraham. Furthermore, sin is found in the angelic nature as in the human nature. Therefore, if he took hold of human nature to free it from sin, it seems there was more reason to take hold of the angelic. I answer that a nature is assumable by the Son of God depending on its fitness to be united to the person of the Word. But this fitness depends on the dignity, so that the nature is assumable which is likely to attain to the Word Himself by knowing and loving Him; and also depending on the need, in the sense that it is subject to a reparable sin, although the

first is found in the angelic nature, the second is not found. But the first and second are found in human nature, which is capable of knowing and loving God, and which has a reparable sin; consequently, it is assumable. But although the first is found in an angelic nature, it lacks the second: for a sin is irreparable not by reason of its gravity, but by reason of the condition of the nature. But what death was to men, the fall was to the angels. But it is clear that all the sins of man, whether they be small or great, are reparable before death; after death they are irreparable and remain for ever. Therefore, the angelic nature is not assumable.

150. – Then (v. 17) he concludes to a likeness. As if to say: Therefore, because He did not assume an angel but the seed of Abraham, it behooved him in all things to become like unto his brethren. In all things, I say, in which they are brethren, not in guilt but in punishment. Therefore, it behooved Him to have a nature that could suffer; hence ‘one tempted in all things as we are, without sin’ (Heb. 4:15). Likewise, they are brethren as to grace: ‘Behold, what love God showed to us: that we should be called and be sons of God (1 Jn. 3:1); ‘Those whom he foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son’ (Rom. 8:29).

151. – Then he shows the usefulness of that resemblance when he says, **that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest**. Here he does two things: First, he mentions the likeness; secondly, he explains it (v. 18).

152. – Christ as mediator has two functions: one sets Him over the whole human race as judge: ‘He gave him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man’ (Jn. 5:27); the other is in relation to God, before Whom He intercedes for us as our advocate. In a judge mercy is desired particularly by the guilty; but in an advocate fidelity. Now both of these qualities were exhibited by Christ during His Passion. Hence, in regard to the first, he says that by His Passion He was made like unto his brethren, that he might become merciful.

153. – But wasn’t He merciful from all eternity? It seems so, because ‘his mercies are above all his works’ (Ps. 144:9). For mercy consists in having a heart grieved at another’s misfortune: in one way, by merely recognizing the misfortune, which is the way God recognized our wretchedness without suffering; in another way, by experiencing our misfortune, which is how Christ experienced our misery, especially during the Passion.

In addition He is a faithful advocate; hence, he is called a faithful high priest. ‘But Christ, being come a high priest of the good things to come’ (Heb. 9:11); and it is required that He be faithful: ‘Here now it is required among the dispensers that a man be found faithful’ (1 Cor. 4:2); and all this that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people, for whom He willed to die.

154. – Then when he says, For in that wherein he himself has suffered and been tempted, he shows its utility. As if to say: I do not speak of Christ as God, but as man. Therefore, in that, i.e., in that nature which He assumed, in order to experience in Himself that our cause is His own. Hence he says, **he suffered and was tempted; therefore, he is able to succor them also that are tempted**. Or, another way: He became merciful and faithful, because in suffering and being tempted He has a kinship to mercy. He says, **tempted**, not by the flesh but by the enemy: ‘Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil’ (Mt. 4:1). For in Christ there was no rebellion of the lower powers against the higher, but He suffered for us in the flesh: ‘Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps’ (1 Pt. 2:21); ‘Christ, therefore, having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought’ (1 Pt. 4:1).

3-1

Heb 3:1-6

¹Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. ²He was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in God's house. ³Yet Jesus has been counted worthy of as much more glory than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house. ⁴(For every house is built by some one, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶but Christ was faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.

155. – As was said above, the Old Law derived its authority from three sources, namely, from angels, from Moses, and from Aaron, the high priest. But the Apostle preferred Christ, the Author of the New Testament, to the angels through whom the Law was given. Here he intends to prefer Him to Moses, who was the promulgator and, as it were, the lawgiver of the Old Testament. In regard to this he does two things: first, he prefers Christ to Moses; secondly, he concludes from this that Christ is most deserving of obedience (v. 7). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions Christ's dignity; secondly, he shows what is common to Christ and Moses (v. 3). In regard to the first he does two things: First, he describes the condition of those to whom he speaks; secondly, of the one of whom he speaks (v. 3b).

156. – He describes those to whom he speaks, first, from their charity; hence, he says, **brethren**, as if to say: Because you are brothers of Christ and of one another: 'All you are brothers' (Mt. 23:8); 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren' (above 2:11). But charity causes this brotherhood: 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity' (Ps. 132:1). Secondly, he describes them from their sanctity when he says, **holy**; and this because they receive the sacraments by which we are made holy: 'But you are washed, but you are sanctified' (1 Cor. 6:11). Thirdly, he describes them from their vocation when he says, **who share in a heavenly call**. Now this call can be understood to be heavenly in two ways: by reason of its end or by reason of its source. By reason of the end, because they are not called to an earthly reward as in the Old Testament, but to a heavenly kingdom: 'He has called you to his kingdom and glory' (1 Th. 2:12); 'Who called us from darkness into his marvelous light' (1 Pt. 2:9). By reason of its source, because it is not due to our merits but to grace: 'He called us by his grace' (Gal. 1:15); 'Who has raised up the just one from the east, has called him to follow him' (Is. 41:2).

But he says, who share in, because not only the Jews have been called to the faith and the New Testament, but also the Gentiles: 'who has made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light' (Col. 1:12). Therefore, because you have charity and are saints and called to heavenly things, you should gladly hear one speak of Him through Whom those things come to you.

157. – Then he describes Him of Whom he speaks when he says, **consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession**: ‘Look on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith’ (Heb. 12:2). For the Apostle prefers Christ to Moses and Aaron and, therefore, ascribes to Him the dignity of both: of Moses, because He was sent by God: ‘He sent Moses, his servant’ (Ps. 104:26); of Aaron, because he was a high priest: ‘Take unto you also Aaron, your brother with his sons from among the children of Israel, that they may minister to me in the priest’s office’ (Ex. 28:1). But Christ was sent in a more excellent manner than Moses: ‘I beseech the Lord, send whom you will send’ (Ex. 4:13). As if to say: You will send one more worthy. He will be a high priest and a prophet: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedech’ (Ps. 104:4). No need to consider that apostle, i.e., Moses, and the high priest Aaron; **but consider the apostle and high priest of our confession**, i.e., Him Whom we confess. For it is necessary to salvation to confess Him: ‘With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation’ (Rom. 10:10). Or **of confession**, i.e., of the spiritual sacrifice. For every priest is ordained to offer sacrifice. But there are two kinds of sacrifice, namely, the corporal or temporal, for which Aaron was appointed; the other is spiritual, which consists in the confession of faith: ‘A sacrifice of praise will honor me’ (Ps. 49:25). For this sacrifice Christ was appointed: ‘I desire not holocausts of rams and fat of fatlings and blood of calves and lambs and buck goats’ (Is. 1:11). Then he continues: ‘Offer sacrifice no more in vain.’

158. – Then (v. 2) he compares Christ to Moses; first, he mentions that in which they agree; secondly, that in which Christ excels Moses (v. 3).

159. – What is common to Christ and Moses is fidelity to God; hence he says, **He was faithful to him who appointed him**. Here it should be noted that everything said here of Moses is based on the statement found in Num. (12:7), where the Lord shows the excellence of Moses, after Aaron and Miriam spoke against him. We find these words, which the Apostle cites here: ‘If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision or I will speak to him in a dream. But it is not so with my servant Moses, who is most faithful in all my house’ (Num. 12:7). Here we find Moses commended more highly than in any other place in the Bible. Therefore, the Apostle accepts this as the highest commendation of Moses. But this can apply to Christ and to Moses: that it is true of Moses is clear from history. But it is true of Christ, because as man He is faithful to Him Who appointed Him, namely, to God the Father, Who made him an apostle and high priest, not, of course, according to His divine nature, because in that way He was not made or created, but begotten; but according to the human: ‘Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh’ (Rom. 1:3). But He was faithful to God the Father, first, by not attributing to Himself what He had, but to the Father: ‘My doctrine is not mine’ (Jn. 6:16). Secondly, He sought the Father’s glory and not His own: ‘He that seeks the glory of him that sent him, he is true, and there is no injustice in him’ (Jn. 7:18). Thirdly, because He obeyed the Father perfectly: ‘He was made obedient unto death’ (Phil. 2:8). Therefore, Christ is faithful to Him Who made Him, as Moses was, and this is God’s house—this house being the totality of the faithful: ‘Holiness becomes your house, O Lord, unto length of

days' (Ps. 93:5). Or, **in all of God's house**, i.e., in the whole world and not only in Judea, as Moses: 'I have given you to be the light of the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation even to the farthest part of the earth' (Is. 49:6).

160. – Then (v. 3) he prefers Christ to Moses in two respects; first, as to power; secondly, as to condition (v. 3b). But in commending Christ, he commends Him as having honor in all His house, as Moses had: Yet Christ excels him: first, he gives the reason; secondly, he explains it (v. 4).

161. – But the Apostle's reason is that more glory is due Him Who built the house, than to him that dwells in it. But Christ built the house: 'You have made the morning light and the sun' (Ps. 73:16); 'Wisdom has built herself a house', i.e., the Church (Pr. 9:1). For Christ by Whom grace and truth came, built the Church, as legislator; but Moses, as promulgator of the Law: therefore, it is only as promulgator that glory is due Moses. Hence, his face became bright: 'So that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance' (2 Cor. 3:7).

Therefore, the sequence of thought is this: You say that Christ is faithful as Moses was. Why then overlook Him? Certainly this man was counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, by so much as he that has built the house has greater honor than the house. As if to say: Even though Moses deserves mention, Christ is more honorable, because He is the builder of the house and the chief lawgiver: 'Behold, God is high in his strength, and none is like him among the lawgivers' (Jb. 36:22). Therefore, if Moses is deserving of glory, Christ is more deserving: 'For is the ministration of condemnation be in glory, much more the ministration of justice abounds in glory' (2 Cor. 3:9).

162. – Then he proves the minor premise of his reason when he says: **For every house is built by some man**. But the minor is that Christ built that house. He proves this, first, because every house needs a builder; secondly, because the house of which he speaks was built by Christ, **the builder of all things is God**.

163. – First, therefore, he proves that this house, as any other, needs a builder, because its various parts are put together by someone. This is obvious in a structure in which the wood and stones, of which it is composed, are united by someone. But the assembly of the faithful, which is the Church and the house of God, is composed of various elements, namely, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free. Therefore, the church, as any other house, is put together by someone. He gives only the conclusion of this syllogism, supposing the truth of the premises as evident: 'Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood' (1 Pt. 2:5); 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone' (Eph. 2:20).

164. – Then (v. 4b) he proves that Christ is the builder of that house, for He is God, the builder of all things. And if this is understood of the whole world, it is plain: 'He spoke and they were made; he

commanded and they were created' (Ps. 32:9) But there is another spiritual creation, which is made by the Spirit: 'Send forth your spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth' (Ps. 104:30). This is brought about by God through Christ: 'Of his own will has he begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning of his creature' (Jas. 1:18); 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works' (Eph. 2:10). Therefore, God created that house, namely, the Church, from nothing, namely, from the state of sin to the state of grace. Therefore, Christ, by Whom He made all things, 'by whom also he made the world' (Heb. 1:2), is more excellent (since He has the power to make) than Moses, who was only the announcer.

165. – Then (v. 5) he prefers Christ to Moses in regard to their state. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states his reason; secondly, he explains it (v. 6b).

166. – His reasoning is this: It is obvious that the master is of more value in his own house than a servant in the master's house. But Moses was faithful as a servant in the house of his master, but Christ as the master in His own house, therefore, etc.

Here it should be noted how carefully the Apostle notes the words written of Moses, in which things are said of him: for he is called a servant and he is called faithful, not in his own house, but in the house of our Lord. And in regard to those two things he prefers Christ to Moses: first, he shows what is true of Moses; secondly, of Christ (v. 6).

167. – He says, therefore, that **Moses was faithful as a servant**, i.e., as a faithful dispenser: 'Well done, good and faithful servant: because you have been faithful over a few things, I will place you over many things' (Mt. 25:21). But Christ is a servant in a sense, namely, according to the flesh: 'Taking the form of a servant' (Phil. 2:7).

But Moses was God's servant in proposing God's words to the children of Israel. From this it is clear that because he was a faithful servant, the things he said were ordained to another, namely, to Christ: to testify to the things which were to be spoken later: 'If you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe me also; for he wrote of me' (Jn. 5:46). Therefore, because he was a servant, he was not in his own house but in another's house, and because of the things he said were a testimony of those things which were to be said of Christ, Moses was in respects lower than Christ.

168. – Then (v. 6), **But Christ was faithful over God's house as a son**, he shows what belongs to Christ, namely, that Christ is not as a servant but as a Son in His Father's house and, consequently, in His own, because He is the natural heir: 'Whom he has appointed heir of all things, by Whom also he made the world' (Heb. 1:2). For the Church is Christ's house: 'A wise woman builds her house' (Pr. 14:1); 'The Lord has said to me: You are my son, this day have I begotten you' (Ps. 2:7); 'My beloved son in whom I am well pleased' (Mt. 3:17). Therefore, He is not a servant but a Son, and in His own house, whereas Moses is a servant in another's house: 'The son abides forever' (Jn. 8:55).

169. – Then when he says, **We are his house**, he shows what that house is; for that house is the faithful, who are the house of Christ, because they believe in Christ: ‘In the house of God which is the Church’ (1 Tim. 3:15) and also because Christ dwells in them: ‘That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17). Therefore, this house is we, the faithful.

But in order that we be the house of God four things are required, which are necessary in a house and are not in a tent: first, that our hope and faith be firm and permanent; but a tent, even though it be firm, can be quickly moved and signifies those who believe for a while, but in time of temptation fall away. But they are the house who retain the word of God. Therefore, he says, **if we hold fast our confidence**. For it has been stated above that confidence is hope with firm expectation and without fear: ‘And such confidence we have through Christ towards God’ (2 Cor. 3:4). Secondly, that it be properly ordained; therefore, he says, **and pride in our hope**, i.e., ordained to the glory of God, so that scorning all else, we may take pride in the hope of glory: ‘Let him who glories, glory in knowing and having known me’ (Jer. 9:14). Thirdly, that it be preserving; hence, he says, **unto the end**: ‘He that perseveres to the end, he shall be saved’ (Mt. 10:22). Fourthly, that it be firm and not dislodged by any adversity; hence, he says, **hold fast**: ‘Who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm’ (Heb. 6:18).

3-2

Heb 3:7-11

⁷Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, when you hear his voice, ⁸do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their hearts; they have not known my ways.’ ¹¹As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

170. – Having proved that Christ is greater than Moses, the Apostle now concludes that Christ is more deserving of our obedience. He does this by the authority of David the prophet in Psalm 94. He does three things: first, he proposes the authority which contains an exhortation; secondly, he explains it (v. 12); thirdly, he argues from the authority and the explanation (chap. 4). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he hints at the authority of the following words; secondly, he makes the exhortation which is the authority (v. 7b); thirdly, he presents a similitude (v. 8b).

171. – The authority of the words consists in the fact that they were not uttered by human lips, but by the Holy Spirit; hence, he says, **Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit says**. As if to say: Christ has more grace than Moses. Therefore, if we hearken to Moses, we ought not harden our hearts against hearing Christ. But he cites the words of the Old Testament for the New, lest anyone suppose that they refer only to the Old Testament; for they should be referred also to the New and to another time. They are the words of the Holy Spirit, because, as it says in 2 Pt. (1:21): ‘Prophecy came not by the will of man at any time, but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit.’ For David himself says of himself: ‘The spirit of the Lord spoke through me’ (2 Sam. 23: 2). Therefore, in this he shows that the authority is true, because it is from the Holy Spirit—against the Manicheans.

172. – Then (v. 7b) he gives the admonition in which he does three things: first, he describes the time; secondly, he mentions the benefit (v. 7b) thirdly, the admonition (v. 8).

173. – The time is **today**, i.e., day time. For the time of the Old Law was called night, because it was a time of shadows: ‘For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come’ (below 10:1). But the time of the New Testament, because it repels the shadow of the night of the Law, is called day: ‘The night is passed, the day is at hand’ (Rom. 13:12). That time is called day, because it witnessed the rising of the sun of justice: ‘But unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise’ (Mal 4:2). This day is not succeeded by night, but by a clearer day, namely, when we shall see the Sun of justice with His face revealed, when we shall see Him by His essence.

174. – And in this day a benefit will be given to us. For he continues, when you hear his voice, because we hear His voice, which was not true of the Old Testament, in which the words of the prophets were heard: ‘In times past God spoke to the Son’ (Heb. 1:1); ‘Therefore, my people shall know my name in that day, because it was I myself that spoke, behold, I am here’ (Is. 52:6); ‘Let your voice sound on my ears’ (S of S 2:14). For in this the benefit so long desired is shown to us: ‘If you had known and in this your day, the things that are to your peace’ (Lk. 19:42).

175. – Therefore, if that is the benefit, here is the admonition, **harden not your hearts**. For a hard heart smacks of evil. That is hard which does not yield, but resists and does not receive an impression. Therefore, man’s heart is hard, when it does not yield to God’s command nor easily receive divine impressions: ‘A hard heart shall fear evil at the last’ (Sir. 3:27); But according to your hardness and impenitent heart, you treasure up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath’ (Rom. 2:5). But this hardening is caused by two things: first, by God not offering grace: ‘He has mercy on whom he will, and whom he wills, he hardens’ (Rom. 9:18); secondly, by the sinner hardening himself by not obeying God and by not opening his heart to grace: ‘And they made their heart as the adamant stone, lest they should hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts sent in his spirit by the hand of the former prophets’ (Zech 7:12). Therefore, **harden not your hearts** i.e., do not close your hearts to the Holy Spirit: ‘You always resist the Holy Spirit’ (Ac. 7:51).

176. – Then he presents the resemblance when he says, **as in the rebellion**. This is a resemblance based on a past event: for the faithful are instructed about the things to be done in the New Testament from the things that occurred in the past, as Rom. (15:4) testifies: ‘What things soever were written, were written for our learning.’ In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives an example in general by citing their guilt; secondly, he gives specific examples (v. 9).

177. – If we are to follow the Apostle’s explanation, we must use the senses which fit the explanation. Thus we read that among others there were two sins committed by the Jews which were severely punished: one was the disobedience of the spies mentioned in Num. (13 & 14), for which the Lord wished to wipe out the people. Hence, He swore that no one but Caleb and Joshua would enter the promised land. He calls this a rebellion, because, although they had offended God in other ways, this sin was particularly bitter; for just as bitter fruit, not being ripe, is not suitable for eating, so then God’s anger was inflexible: ‘How often did they provoke him in the desert, and move him to wrath in the place without water’ (Ps. 77:40)? ‘You have provoked him who made you’ (Bar. 4:7). The other sin was that of tempting God. For they frequently tempted Him, sometimes for water, sometimes for meat, and sometimes for bread, so that they tempted Him ten times: ‘They have tempted me now ten times’ (Num. 14:22); ‘Behold, these ten times you confound me’ (Jb. 19:2). Hence he says, **in the day of testing**.

But someone might suppose the signs of rebellion and testing are the same, and that the Apostle should say: ‘Harden not your hearts as in the rebellion, which occurred in the day of testing.’ But this

does not agree with the Apostle's explanation. Therefore, we should say, **Harden not your hearts as in the rebellion**, and again, **as in the day of testing**, so that there are two sins; hence, Ps. 77 (v. 41) says: 'And they turned back and tempted God; and grieved the Holy One of Israel.'

178. – Then (v. 9) he considers their specific sins. In regard to this he does two things: first, he mentions the sin of testing; secondly, the sin of rebellion (v. 10b). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he mentions the sin of testing; secondly, he shows its gravity (v. 9b); thirdly, the punishment (v. 10).

179. – He says, therefore, that they were guilty of the sin of testing Him in the desert, because your fathers tempted me there; and I speak in the Lord's person. Here it should be noted that temptation is an act of testing about something one does not know. Hence, it is from unbelief that a person tempts God, yet it should be noted that sometimes one tempts God, not with the intention of trying and testing, although it is done after the manner of testing. For one who uses an object of his own, because it is useful, is not, properly speaking, testing it; for example, if someone fleeing were to ride on his own horse he would be testing it, but not with the intention of testing; but when his action is useless, then he is testing. Likewise, if someone were to expose himself to danger, compelled by necessity in the hope of divine help, he would not be tempting God; but if without necessity, he would be tempting God; hence the Lord says in Mt. (4:7): 'You shall not tempt the Lord, your God', because there was not need to cast Himself down. So, they tempted the Lord, because they doubted His power, complaining against Moses, as if the Lord could not give them food, even though they had witnessed His power in greater matters; therefore, they were guilty of the sin of unbelief, which is the greatest.

180. – Then he mentions the gravity of their sin when he says, **they proved and saw my works**. For the greater the benefits one receives from God and the greater the certitude he has of God's power, if he later doubts, he sins more gravely. But they had seen signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, the dividing of the sea, and other miracles, and yet they did not believe; hence, it is stated in Num. (14:22): 'Yet all the men that have seen my majesty and the signs that I have done in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now ten times, have not obeyed my voice'. Hence he said, **proved**, i.e., wished to experience, and **saw**, i.e., experienced my works, i.e., effects which not have taken place, unless they had been performed by one with infinite power. And all this not for one day, but for forty years, during which they remained in the desert, because they always had manna and the pillar of fire and the cloud. Or, they proved and saw me, because He never failed them.

181. – Then (v. 10b) he describes the punishment for their sin. For which cause, i.e., for which sin, **I was provoked**, i.e., outraged: not that there is anger in God except metaphorically, because He punishes as one in anger does. This punishment is frequently mentioned in Exodus and Numbers, for they were often prostrated. Hence in 1 Cor. (10:5) he speaks of the punishment of that sin. Or I was near, namely, by punishing them. For when the Lord helps the good and punishes the wicked, He is near them; but when

He conceals men's sins because they repent, and dissembles the affliction of the just in order that their merit may increase, then He seems to be far away: 'The clouds are his covert, and he does not consider our things, and he walks about the poles of heaven' (Jb. 22:14). Or, near, in regard to divine mercy, because the fact that he punishes them in this life is a sign of great mercy: 'Here burn, here cut, but spare me in eternity' (Augustine).

182. – Then (v. 10c) he describes the sin of provocation in detail. And this is clear from (v. 11). In regard to this he does two things: first, he mentions the sin; secondly, he adds the punishment (v. 11). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions their persistence in evil; secondly, their departure from the good (v. 10d).

183. – He says, therefore, I was always near them, namely, by punishing them, and I said, namely, in the eternal plan: **They always go astray in heart**: 'You have always been rebellious against the Lord' (Dt. 31:27); 'If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots: you also may do well, when you have learned evil' (Jer. 13:23). Thus, therefore, a person provokes God in one way, when he obstinately clings to evil; in another way when he scorns the good. Hence, he says, **They have not known my ways**, i.e. not with simple ignorance, but affected. The sin, therefore, is this: **they have not known**, i.e., they refused to know: 'We desire not the knowledge of your ways' (Jb. 21:14); 'He would not understand that he might do well' (Ps. 34:4). Or, **they have not known**, i.e., they have not approved, as the Apostle says: 'The Lord knows who are his' (2 Tim. 2:19).

184. – Then he shows the punishment when he says: **As I have sworn in my wrath: they shall never enter my rest**. In these words he suggests immutability; for when God or an angel swears, it is a sign of the unchangeableness of that concerning which He swears: 'The Lord has sworn and he will not repent' (Ps. 110:4). Yet at times He swears only conditionally, because if He did not repent, these evils would come upon them. Then he suggests that that punishment is not given as a threat but is aimed at their destruction, because he says, in his wrath: 'Lord, chastise me not in your wrath' (Ps. 6:2). Therefore, He swore in His wrath, **they shall never enter my rest**. Now there is threefold rest: one is temporal: 'You have much goods laid up for many years: take your rest; eat, drink, make good cheer' (Lk. 12:19). The second is the rest of conscience: 'I have labored a little and have found much rest to myself' (Sir. 51:35). The third is the rest of eternal glory: 'In peace in the self-same. I will sleep and I will rest' (Ps. 4:9). Therefore, what is stated here can be explained in each of these ways, namely, they have not entered the rest of the promised land or the rest of conscience or the rest of eternal happiness.

3-3

Heb 3:12-19

¹²Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end, ¹⁵while it is said, “Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” ¹⁶Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses? ¹⁷And with whom was he provoked forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did he swear that they should never enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

185. – Above, the Apostle showed on the authority of the Psalmist that Christ must be obeyed strictly. In that authority he found three things, namely, the exhortation, the guilt, and the punishment. These he now explains in that order: first, the exhortation; secondly, the guilt (v. 16); thirdly, the punishment (v. 18). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he exhorts them to be carefully attentive; secondly, to mutual exhortation (v. 12).

186. – He says, therefore, **take care**. For every man should consider the state in which he is: ‘Let everyone prove his own work’ (Gal. 6:4); ‘See your ways in the valley’ (Jer. 2:23). **Take care therefore, brethren**, each one to himself, because each is part of the assembly, and ‘to each one God gave commandment concerning his neighbor’ (Sir. 19:12): **take care**, i.e., let one prove the other, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. As if to say: many of you are in a perfect state, yet because of weakness and free will, there could be evil in some of you: ‘Behold, they that serve him are not steadfast; and in his angels he found wickedness. How much more shall they that dwell in houses of clay, who have an earthly foundation’ (Jb. 4:18-19)? ‘Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil’ (Jn. 6:71). Therefore no one should be solicitous for himself only, but also for each member of his group. But why? **Lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart**. This is the evil about which the Apostle speaks, namely, an unbelieving heart, i.e., not firm in faith. In this does wickedness consist, because just as the soul’s good consists in clinging to God, ‘It is good for me to adhere to my God’ (Ps. 72:27), through faith, so man’s evil consists in withdrawing from God: ‘Know and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for you to have left the Lord, your God’ (Jer. 2:19). And again he says, of falling away, because one departs by unbelief, from the living God: ‘They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water’ (Jer. 2:15). But he says, **from the living God**, because He is life in Himself and is the life of the soul: ‘In him was life’ (Jn. 1:4). He says this to show that by withdrawing from God, man incurs spiritual death.

187. – But if that evil should be found in anyone, should he despair? No; he should be admonished all the more. Therefore, he says, but **exhort one another every day**, i.e., continually, namely, by discussing your conscience and by exhorting to good, **as long as it is called today**, i.e., while the present time of grace lasts: ‘I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day’ (Jn. 9:4). And this in order that none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For, as has been stated above, the heart is hardened by persisting in evil. But a person clings to sin because he is deceived. Or, it is natural for the appetite to cling to the good; but it withdraws from good, because it is deceived: ‘They err who work evil’ (Pr. 14:22); ‘I have strayed from the path of truth’ (Wis. 5:6).

188. – Then (v. 14) he explains their condition. As if to say: That condition is more powerful than the other, because they only hear, but we share in Christ. And he speaks properly, because in the Old Testament, there was only hearing, and grace was not conferred *ex opere operato*; but in the New Testament there are both the hearing of faith and the grace given to the very one acting. Hence, we are partakers of grace, first, by accepting the faith: ‘That Christ by faith may dwell in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17); secondly, by the sacraments of faith: ‘As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ’ (Gal. 3:27); thirdly, by partaking of the body of Christ: ‘The bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of Christ’ (1 Cor. 10:16)?

189. – But it should be noted that there are two ways of sharing in Christ: one is imperfect through the faith and the sacraments; the other is perfect through the presence and vision of the reality. But the first we already possess in reality; the second we possess in hope. But because hope has this condition, namely, that we persevere, he says, **if only we hold our first confidence firm unto the end**. For whoever is baptized in Christ receives a new nature and Christ is somehow formed in him: ‘My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you’ (Gal. 4:19). This will be truly completed in us in heaven, but here it is only the beginning; and this by formed faith, because unformed faith is dead: ‘Faith without works is dead’ (Jas. 2:26). Hence, unformed faith is not a beginning of partaking of Christ, but formed faith: ‘Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for’, i.e., the foundation and the beginning.

190. – He says, therefore, we are partakers of Christ; yet so, if **we hold our first confidence firm unto the end**.

But it seems that fear is the beginning, because it says in Ps. 110: ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.’ I answer that faith is formed by charity; but charity does not exist without chaste fear. Therefore, formed faith always has charity annexed to it. Hence, faith and fear are the beginning.

191. – Then when he says, **who were they that heard**, he explains what he had said about their sin. As if to say: ‘You are made partakers of Christ, if you do not harden your hearts, as they who have heard and yet were rebellious. Was it not all? No, not all; for two, namely, Caleb and Joshua remained and consoled

the others. And by this we are given to understand that, since not the whole Church falls but only some, the wicked are punished, but not the good, as in those two: ‘And I will leave me seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not been bowed before Baal’ (1 Kg 19:18); ‘There is a remnant saved according to the election of grace’ (Rom. 11:5).

192. – Then (v. 17) he explains what he had said about the punishment.

193. – He says, therefore: **With whom was he provoked forty years? Was it not with them that sinned?** From this it is clear that forty years, refers to the statement, **I was provoked**. Hence, he says that he was offended through those forty years. Here it should be noted that all who left Egypt died in the desert, as it is stated in Jos. (5:4), but not all were laid low, but only some: either by God, as when the earth opened and swallowed Dathan and Abiram: (Ps. 77); but others were laid low by Moses, as in the construction of the golden calf (Ex. 32); still others were killed by enemies, and some died a natural death. Therefore, not all were laid low. Hence, it was not a general punishment, although it was general enough so that only two should enter the promised land.

194. – And he says of that land, **and to whom did he swear**, i.e., firmly decree, **that they should never enter into his rest**, but to them that were incredulous. Hence, it is clear that they could not enter into His rest because of their unbelief. Therefore, he says, **we see**, because we have experienced **that they could not enter because of their unbelief**. Or we see by their punishment that they could not enter because of unbelief.

4-1

Heb 4:1-8

¹Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers. ³For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall never enter my rest,’” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ⁵And again in this place he said, “They shall never enter my rest.” ⁶Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷again he sets a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” ⁸For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day.

195. – Having cited the authority and explained it, the Apostle now argues from it. In regard to this he does two things: first, he urges them to be anxious to enter; secondly, he advises them to hasten to enter (v. 11). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he inspires them with fear; secondly, he shows that anxiety should press them (v. 2).

196. – He says, therefore: It has been stated that He was offended by those who would not believe, so that He swore that they will not enter into His rest. Therefore, **let us fear**, namely, with a chaste fear and with anxiety: ‘Blessed is the man that is always fearful’ (Pr. 28:14); ‘He that thinks himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall’ (1 Cor. 10:12). For such fear is a useful admonition to give, and it is the companion of three spiritual virtues, namely, of hope, faith, and charity: ‘I am the mother of fair love and of fear and of knowledge and of holy hope’ (Sir. 24:24). But what should we fear? **While the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it.** For happiness or felicity consists in a man’s entering it: ‘Happy shall I be if there shall remain of my seed to see the glory of Jerusalem’ (Tob. 13:20); ‘Looking diligently, lest any man be wanting to the grace of God’ (Heb. 12:15), because, as Chrysostom says: ‘The punishment of not seeing God is greater than other punishments inflicted on the damned.’ And he says, **lest any of you be judged** according to God’s judgment: ‘Depart, you accursed, into everlasting fire’ (Mt. 25:41). Or be judged according to human opinion: ‘For know you this and understand that no fornicator or unclean or covetous person (which is a serving of idols) has inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God’ (Eph. 5:5). Therefore, they should fear lest any of them be judged to have failed to reach it, because the promise of entering was made to them: ‘And my people shall sit in the beauty of peace and in the tabernacles of confidence and in wealthy rest’ (Is. 32:18); ‘From henceforth now says the Spirit, that they rest from their labors’ (Rev. 14:13). One

should fear, therefore, that on account of his own guilt, he fails to enter, because he abandoned the promise, which we abandon by deserting faith, hope, and charity, through which we can enter. And this is done by mortal sin.

197. – Then he shows what anxiety should press us. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states his intention; secondly, he proves it (v. 3). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that this promise has been made to us; secondly, that that promise is not enough (v. 2b).

198. – He says, therefore: **for good news came to us as to them**. Here it should be noted that the things promised in the Old Testament should be understood spiritually: ‘All things happened to them in a figure’ (1 Cor. 10:11); ‘What things soever were written, were written for our learning’ (Rom. 13:4).

199. – Then when he says, **but the message did not benefit them**, he shows that the promise is not enough, but that we should be solicitous; hence, he says that the message, which was heard and not believed, profited them nothing: ‘For not the hearers but the doers of the law will be justified’ (Rom. 2:13). And he says, **not being met [mixed] with faith**, because just as the union of intellect and thing understood make one thing, so the believer’s heart and formed faith make one thing: ‘He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit’ (1 Cor. 6:17). For the words of God are so efficacious that they should be believed as soon as they are heard: ‘your testimonies are become exceedingly credible’ (Ps. 92:5).

200. – Then when he says, **for we who have believed enter that rest**, he proves his conclusion. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows that it is necessary for us to believe, just as it was for them; secondly, he cites two authorities to prove his proposition (v. 3c); thirdly, he argues from them (v. 6).

201. – He says, therefore: The word was spoken to us as it was to them that we shall enter into rest: ‘In peace in the selfsame, I will sleep and be at rest’ (Ps. 4:9); ‘You shall rest and there shall be none to make you afraid’ (Jb. 11:19). But there is a twofold rest: one in external goods, and a man passes to it from peace of mind; the other is in spiritual good, which is within, and to it a man enters: ‘Enter into the joy of your lord’ (Mt. 25:21); ‘The kind has brought me into his storerooms’ (S of S 1:3). Then he cites the authority: **As I have sworn I my wrath: they shall never enter my rest**.

202. – Then (v. 3b) he cites two authorities: one is from the Law in Genesis (chap. 2) and the other from Ps. 94. He says, therefore, in regard to the first: **although his works from the foundation of the world were finished. For he has spoken somewhere of the seventh day**. This can be read in two ways: in one way by omitting the **for**. Then the sense is this: they shall enter into the rest which was prefigured by the seventh day from the foundation of the world. And God rested the seventh day from all his works. Or the Holy Spirit spoke in a certain place of the seventh day. And he spoke after describing the works of the six days, when the works from the foundation of the world were finished. Bu he says, **from the foundation**

of the world, because the world was first established, and after six days it was made perfect in all its parts.

203. – In regard to the distinction of the days the saints speak in different ways: for Augustine treats the matter differently from the other saints. Yet no matter how they are treated, it is clear that those works were perfect. For they contain a twofold perfection: one is according to the parts of the world which are heaven and the four elements; and this was wrought by the work of creation, which occurred on the first day, and by the work of distinction, which occurred on the second and third day. In this, Augustine agrees with the others. The other perfection is according to the individual parts. And this pertains to the work of ornamentation which occurred on the fourth day in regard to the higher things, on the fifth day in regard to the intermediate elements, namely, air and water, and on the sixth day in regard to earth, which is the lowest element.

204. – But if he rested on the seventh day, who made it, if it is not a work of God? ‘My father works until now and I work’ (Jn. 5:17). I answer that ‘rest’ is not taken as the opposite of labor, but as the opposition of motion. For even when He creates He is not being moved; yet, because we speak of him only in terms of sensible things in which there is no activity without motion; therefore, every action, broadly speaking, is called a motion, and He is said to have rested because He ceased producing new species. So God rested from producing works, because all in some sense preceded. And so, God made the seventh day as every other day, because something was added then, for that was the time when the state of purgation began. For every addition varied the state of the world, and made one day.

It should be noted with Augustine that he does not say simply that He rested, but that he rested from his works. For He rested in Himself from all eternity, but when He rested, it was not in His works, but from His works. For God works in a different manner from other artisans: for an artisan acts because of a need, as a house builder makes a house to rest in it, and a cutlerer a knife for gain; hence, the desire of every artisan comes to rest in his work. But not so with God, because He does not act out of need but to communicate His goodness; hence, he does not rest in His work, but from producing a work; and He rests only in His goodness.

205. – Then he cites the authority of David, which has already been explained. But when he says, **since, then, it remains for some to enter it**, he argues from the premises. In regard to this he does two things: first he accepts the sense of the second authority; secondly, he argues from the first (v. 9). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he extracts two things from the second authority; secondly, he shows that those two things are understood in it (v. 8).

206. – Therefore, he extracts two things: one is well known, namely, that the ancestral fathers did not enter; the other is that during the time of David there remained another rest to be given. For although the promised rest was to be obtained in the promised land, yet by the fact David so long afterward says,

Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts, he shows that another rest remains. Otherwise, he would have made no mention of the rest, saying, **Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts**. There is, therefore, a rest into which we are to enter, but which they did not enter because of unbelief. Therefore, because they did not enter, others to whom the promise was made must enter, because they to whom it was first preached, did not enter. Therefore, it remains for others to enter. The reason for this is that if God created man for eternal happiness, for he created him according to His own image and likeness, He prepared a rest for him. Therefore, although someone might be excluded because of his sin, God does not wish that preparation to have been made in vain. Therefore, some will enter, as is clear from those invited to the marriage feast: ‘The marriage, indeed, is ready, but they that were invited are not worthy. Go, therefore, into the highways and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage’ (Mt. 22:8).

207. – Then when he says, **For if Joshua had given them rest, God would never have afterwards spoken of another day**, he proves that it remains for others to enter, because if Jesus Nave, i.e., Joshua, had given the children of Israel final rest, God would never have spoken of another day, i.e., another rest would not remain for us, nor would David have spoken of another rest after that day. Hence, it is clear that that rest was a sign of spiritual rest.

4-2

Heb 4:9-13

⁹So then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his. ¹¹Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

208. – Having cited two authorities: one from Genesis (2) and the other from Ps. 94, and drawn his conclusion from the second authority, the Psalm, the Apostle now concludes the same from the first. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives the conclusion; secondly, he gives the reason for the consequence (v. 10).

209. – In regard to the first it should be noted that the Apostle has so far mentioned a triple rest: the first is God's rest from His works, the second is a temporal rest, which the children of Israel had in the promised land; the third is eternal rest, which is designated by the first two. But the Apostle, before mentioning eternal rest, says that after the earthly rest **there remains a day of rest for the people of God**. This was represented in the Old Law by the Sabbath, namely, eternal rest: 'If you call the Sabbath delightful, and the holy of the Lord glorious' (Is. 58:13); 'And there shall be month after month and Sabbath after Sabbath' (Is. 66:23), i.e., eternal rest. And he says, a Sabbath rest, because just as in the Old Law the Sabbath represented God's rest from His works, so that rest will be that of the saints from their labors' (Rev. 14:13).

210. – Hence, he adds, **For whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his works**: because just as God worked six days and rested on the seventh, so by the six days the present time is signified, because it is a perfect number. Therefore, one who works perfectly, rests from his works on the seventh day, as God did from His; but not from all works, because there are certain works, for example, to see, to love and to praise: 'And they rested not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty' (Rev. 4:8), but from laborious works: 'But they who hope in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall work and not faint' (Is. 40:31).

211. – Then (v. 11) he exhorts us to hurry. In regard to this he does two things: first, he give the advice; secondly, the reason for entering that rest (v. 12). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he urges us to hurry; secondly, he shows the danger in delay (v. 11b).

212. – He says, therefore, **Because there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, let us strive [hurry] to enter that rest.** He says, **enter**, because it does not consist in external goods, to which one goes out, but in internal goods: ‘You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance’ (Ex. 15:17); ‘Enter into the joy of the Lord’ (Mt. 25:21). Therefore, there are many reasons for striving to enter: one is that the way is long: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country’ (Lk. 19:12). It is said to be long because of the difference of condition, because the fullness of all good and immunity from all evil is there, and also perfect vision and possession, whereas here we find the opposite. Furthermore, we must hurry, because the time is very short: ‘The days of man are short’ (Jb. 14:5), and because that time, besides being short and brief, is uncertain: ‘Man knows not his own end’ (Ec. 9:12) and because the call is urgent: for an inner call drives us with the goad of charity: ‘When he shall come as violent stream, which the spirit of the Lord drives on’ (Is. 59:19); The charity of Christ presses us’ (2 Cor. 5:14); ‘I have run the way of your commandments’ (Ps. 118:32), and because there is a danger in delay, as is clear from the foolish virgins who arrived late and could not enter.

213. – Therefore, he says, **that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience.** As if to say: the ancients could not enter because of unbelief. Hence, we must beware of the example set by another’s sin, lest we become incredulous, or by another’s punishment, lest we be excluded as they were: ‘she went into the hill country with haste’ (Lk. 1:39). For the punishment of others is brought to our notice as a warning: ‘The wicked man being scourged, the fool shall be wiser’ (Pr. 19:25).

214. – From this it seems that a person who is not corrected by another’s punishment will be punished more severely. But this would mean that the sin of Adam, who did not sin by following another’s example, would be less grave. I answer that these sayings are always to be understood, when other things are equal. For it sometimes happens that one is not graver than another; yet, because of some attendant circumstance, one becomes graver and not another. For example, two adulteries are of themselves equal; yet one which is committed with malice aforethought is graver than one which is committed through passion or weakness. In like manner, an idle word is more grievous when it is spoken from malice.

215. – But how we are to strive is taught by the Apostle in 1 Cor. (9:25), because ‘every one that strives for the mastery refrains himself from all things.’ Therefore, one must strive by putting off impediments, not only refraining from all sin, but also avoiding the occasions of sin: ‘I will lead you by the paths of equity’ (Pr. 4:11).

But we are warned against hurrying: ‘He that is hasty with his feet shall stumble’ (Pr. 19:2). I answer that there are two ways of hurrying: one is by being headlong and this I reprehensible; the other is by being energetic, and this is praiseworthy. For, as the Philosopher says: All men should take a long time to consider, but be quick to carry out their decisions. Therefore, when hurry destroys counsel, it is precipitate and vicious. In this sense the objection is valid; but hurry in executing one’s decision is virtuous and praiseworthy. This is the type of hurry to which the Apostle exhorts us here.

216. – Then (v. 11) he gives the reason for this advice, and especially in regard to the danger. But this reason is taken on the part of Christ in Whom there are two natures: one is the divine according to which he is the Word of the Father; the other is the human according to which He is the high priest offering Himself on the Cross. First, therefore, he gives the reason based on the divinity; secondly, the reason based on the humanity (v. 14); He says three things about the Son of God: first, he describes His power; secondly, His knowledge (v. 12); thirdly, his authority (v. 13b) But he shows his power in three ways: first, its nature, secondly, its vigor (v. 12b); thirdly its action (v. 12c).

217. – He says, therefore, **The word of God is living**. This text is difficult, although it is clearer than another text: for where we have *sermo* the Greek has *logos*, which is the same as *verbum*, ‘word’; hence a saying, i.e., a word. This is the way Augustine explains John’s statement: ‘The word that I have spoken’, i.e., I who am the Word: ‘Your almighty word leapt down from heaven from the royal throne’ (Wis. 18:15). Similarly here, the word (*sermo*) of God is living, i.e., the living Word (*Verbum*) of God. For the Word of God conceived from all eternity in the intellect of the Father is the primordial Word of which Sirach (1:5) says: ‘The word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom.’ And because it is primordial, all other words are derived from it; these words being nothing more than certain conceptions expressed in the angelic mind or ours, hence, that Word is the expression of all words, being their font. And what is said of that Word is somehow applied to the other words according to their mode. But it is said of that Word that it is living. But a thing is called living, when it has its own movement and activity. For as a gushing fountain is called living, so, too, that Word has eternal vigor: ‘For ever, O Lord, your word stands firm in heaven’ (Ps. 118:89); ‘For as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also have life in himself’ (Jn. 5:24). Or it can be referred to His human nature, for it is living, although others may regard it as dead; because it rose no more to die: ‘I was dead, and behold, I am living for ever and ever’ (Rev. 1:18). Similarly, the word of Scripture is living and unfailing: ‘Not as though the word of God had miscarried’ (Rom. 9:6).

218. – Then when he says, **and active** [effectual], he shows its vigor. But the word is said to be effectual because of its supreme power and the infinite force it has: for all such things were made by it: ‘By the word of the Lord the heavens were established’ (Ps. 32:6); it is also effectual, because all the words uttered by God and delivered by angels or man draw there efficacy from it: ‘His word is full of power’ (Ec. 8:4); ‘The word which shall go forth shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and it shall prosper in the things for which I sent it (Is. 55:11).

219. – Then (v. 12b) he shows its action. In regard to this he does two things: first, he describes its action; secondly, he explains this (v. 12c).

220. – He says, therefore: **And more piercing than any two-edged sword**. But this is said to pierce which enters the depths of a thing. But this can take place in two ways: in one way, because it acts on the inmost recesses of a thing: ‘You have wrought all our works for us’ (Is. 26:12); in another way, because it knows the innermost parts of a thing: ‘He needed not that any should give testimony of man: for he knew what was in man (Jn. 2:25); ‘I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth’ (Sir. 24:43). For God’s action and knowledge reach into the inmost parts of a thing; hence, he says, **than any two-edged sword**. For a sword is more penetrating, because it is sharp; and this I especially true of a two-edged sword, which is sharp at both ends. And because the word of God is sharp in its action and its knowledge, it is compared to a two-edged sword: ‘And the sword of the spirit which is the word of God’ (Eph. 6:17); ‘In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword shall visit Leviathan’ (Is. 27:1). Or it is called two-edged in regard to its activity, because it is sharp enough to promote good and destroy evil: ‘From his mouth came out a sharp two-edged sword’ (Rev. 1:16). Or in regard to its knowledge, and it is said to be more piercing than any two-edged sword, i.e., than any human intellect, which is called two-edged, because it is open to either part of a conclusion, until it comes to the end of its scrutiny and fixed its point there, namely, in the truth. For in the ordering of causes we see that a prior cause works at a greater depth than a subsequent one. Hence, that which nature produces is more profound than that which is produced by art. Therefore, because God is the first cause, by His action is produced that which is most inward in a thing, namely, its being.

221. – Then when he says, **and piercing the division of the soul and of the spirit**, he manifests what he had said above about its action. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows this in regard to spiritual things; secondly, in regard to material things (v. 12d)

222. – According to the Apostle there are three things in man: body, soul, and spirit: ‘That you wholly spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord’ (1 Th. 5:23). For we know what the body is. But the soul is that which gives life to the body; whereas the spirit in bodily things is something subtle and signifies immaterial substance: ‘Egypt is man and not God: and their horses, flesh, and not spirit’ (Is. 31:3). Therefore, the spirit in us is that by which we are akin to spiritual substances; but the soul is that through which we are akin to the brutes. Consequently, the spirit is the human mind, namely, the intellect and will.

This has led some to assert that there are different souls in us: one which perfects and vivifies the body and is called a soul in the proper sense; another is the spirit, having an intellect by which we understand and a will by which we will. Consequently, those two are called substances rather than souls. But this opinion was condemned in the book, *The Dogmas of the Church*. Therefore, we must say that the essence of the soul is one and the same, and by its essence it vivifies the body, and by its power, which is called the intellect, it is the principle of understanding eternal things. How this is possible will be clear. For the more perfect a form is, the less its activity depends on matter. Thus the forms of the elements, because they are most imperfect, do not extend beyond matter. Therefore, since the soul is the most noble

of forms, it should have an action which altogether transcends the power of matter. That action is called understanding, on which follows its natural inclination, namely, willing. But there is a triple difference among the actions of the soul: first of all, the soul is that to which pertain the powers by which the soul acts in conjunction with the body; whereas the spirit is that to which pertain the powers by which it acts without the body. But the first difference between those powers and the actions proceeding therefrom is the difference between reason and sensibility, which is a power through which the soul acts with the body; because reason apprehends universals, but the sensibility material and sensible things. The second difference is between the parts of the sensibility, because the sensibility has one state insofar as it tends to its proper object according to its nature, and another state insofar as it is regulated by reason. For the concupiscible appetite is considered one way when it is regarded as a force relative to its object, and another way when it is regarded as partaking of reason. The third difference is between the parts of reason itself relative to its different objects: because it either tends to God, and this is supreme in it; or to spiritual effects, or to temporal effects. The Word of God effects and distinguishes between all those divisions and species, namely, how the sensibility is distinguished from reason; also, the species of the same sensibility in itself; also, the species of the function of reason, and what arises in the rational soul from the consideration of spiritual and earthly things. Or it can be explained according to a Gloss in two ways: so that the soul refers to carnal sins which involve bodily pleasures, such as lust and gluttony; but the spirit refers to spiritual sins, which involve an act of the mind, such as pride, vain glory, and the like. Or by soul is understood evil thoughts, and by spirit good thoughts. Then the sense is this: reaching, i.e., discerning, unto the division of the soul and the spirit, i.e., between carnal and spiritual sins, or between good and evil thoughts.

224. – Then when he says, **of joints and of marrow**, he declares what he had said about God's activity in regard to temporal things. But it should be noted that something fails to penetrate something else for two reasons: one is due to juncture and the other to concealment. But neither of these can impede the word of God. There are in us, of course, certain joints, namely, of nerves and arteries; and there are parts which are enclosed and hidden, such as the marrow enclosed in the bones. But all these are open to the divine gaze; consequently, there is nothing too difficult for Him to penetrate. Or by joints can be understood the union of the soul's parts to one another, as soul to spirit. As if to say: Not only does He reach to a knowledge of the difference and division of the soul and spirit, but to a knowledge of how they are joined. For he knows how the sensibility is ruled by reason. But marrow can be taken to mean that which is concealed in the reason and sensibility: 'Fear him that can send both body and soul to hell' (Mt. 10:28).

225. – Then (v. 12d) he treats of the Word's knowledge. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that all things are subject to His knowledge; secondly, how He knows (v. 13b).

226. – There are two reasons why a thing is not known: either because it is concealed within something; this is the way the secrets of the heart are concealed, because it is very deep and inscrutable: 'The heart is

perverse above all things and inscrutable' (Jer. 17:9). In the heart thoughts are concealed, but the Word of God knows them: 'Take away the evil of your devices from my eyes' (Is. 1:16). Therefore, in regard to this he says, **a discerner of thoughts**. In another way, something is not known, because it is altogether unknown and invisible; which is the way the things of the will are unknown. But in the will is one's intention, which is invisible of its very nature. For what a man does or thinks is revealed in his work, but the intention for which does it is utterly uncertain. But not even these are hidden from God; hence, he continues, **and intentions of the heart**: 'The searcher of hearts and reins', i.e., of thoughts and intentions (Ps. 7:11).

227. – But it should be noted that word, penetrating, can refer to an action, as has been said: then penetrator and discerner differ: but if it refers to thought, then the phrase, discerner of thoughts, explains it. As if to say: You say that it is more penetrating than any two-edged sword; this is true, because it is a discerner of the joints and the marrow, i.e., of thoughts and intentions. For joints are junctures, and, thus, thought in which there is a juncture of terms can be called a joint, when it passes from one thing to another: 'Loose the bands of wickedness' (Is. 58:6); 'Woe to you that draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as the rope of a cart' (Is. 5:18). Also, marrow is something that lies within and is concealed in the bones: 'His bones are moistened with marrow' (Jb. 21:24).

228. – Then when he says, **before him no creature is hidden**, he shows that anything invisible according to its nature is not hidden from God. For if something is not seen by us, it is because it is more simple and more subtle than our bodily or intellectual eyes, such as separated substances, which we cannot see in this life. But nothing is simpler and subtler than the divine intellect. Therefore, no creature is invisible in His sight.

229. – But does He know things in a merely general way, as some claim? No; but all things are naked and open to His eyes. By the eye we mean the cognitive power; for spiritual things are understood through sensible things. But it is significant that he says, **eyes**, because of the variety of things He understands: for He does not know one thing only, but a multitude of things. He says, **naked and open**, for something is known in two ways: in one way, superficially, in another way, in depth. Thus a naked man is seen superficially, but not one who is clothed. but all things are manifest to God, which are seen superficially; for there is nothing covering man to impede God's knowledge, as clothing might: 'Hell is naked before him' (Jb. 26:6). But he says, **open**, because nothing is so concealed that it can escape God's knowledge.

230. – Yet this seems to be contrary to what is stated in Hab (1:13): 'Your eyes are too pure to behold evil, and you cannot look on iniquity.' Therefore, not all things are naked. I answer that in God is knowledge of simple understanding and knowledge of approbation. In the first way He knows all things, even wicked things and things that are not; but in the second way He knows good thing insofar as they exist.

231. – Then when he says, **with whom we have to do**, he shows the perfection of his authority. But this authority is the authority to judge: ‘It is he who was appointed by God to be judge of the living and of the dead’ (Ac. 10:42). To Him, therefore, is our speech, when we render an account of our works: ‘For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the proper things of the body, according as he has done, whether it be good or evil’ (2 Cor. 5:10). Therefore, because He is so powerful, so knowing and so great, let us hasten to enter into that rest.

232. – For three things are required for passing judgment: first, the power to coerce subjects: ‘Seek not to be made a judge, unless you have strength enough to extirpate iniquities’ (Sir. 7:6). And this belongs to Christ: ‘All power is given me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18). Secondly, zeal for the right is required, in order that judgment be pronounced not from hatred or spite, but from love of justice: ‘Whom the Lord loves he chastises; and as a father in the son he pleases himself’ (Pr. 3:12). This love of justice is especially evident in Christ: ‘And justice shall be the girdle of his loins’ (Is. 11:5). Thirdly, there is required wisdom, according to which a judgment is formed: ‘A wise man shall judge his people’ (Sir. 10:1). But Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24). Now this power to judge belongs to Christ as man: ‘He gave him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man’ (Jn. 5:27), not, of course, because of the condition of the nature, according to Augustine, because then all men would have such power, but because of the capital grace, which Christ received in His human nature. But this power to judge belongs to Christ according to His human nature for three reasons: first, by reason of His affinity to men. For just as God works through intermediate causes, as being closer to their effects, so He judges through a man in order that the judgment may be gentler. For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, as has been said. Secondly, because in the final judgment, as Augustine says, there will be a resurrection of dead bodies, which God quickens through the Son of man, just as through the same Christ He quickens souls, inasmuch as He is the Son of God. Thirdly, because, as Augustine says in the book, *The Words of the Lord*, it was proper that those to be judged should see their judge. But the good and the wicked are to be judged. Therefore, in the judgment the form of man will be visible to the good and the wicked, the form of God being reserved for the good. But this power suits Christ both on account of His divine personality, on account of His dignity as head, and on account of the fullness of His sanctifying grace. Furthermore, He obtained it by His merits. hence, it was fitting that according to God’s justice the judge should be one who fought for God’s justice and overcame; and that the one unjustly judged should condemn the guilty: ‘I have overcome and I am set down with my Father on his throne’ (Rev. 3:21); ‘You have sat on the throne who judge justice’ (Ps. 9:5); ‘The judge will sit who stood before a judge, and He will condemn the guilty who was falsely judged guilty’ (Augustine, *The Words of the Lord*).

4-3

Heb 4:14-16

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

233. – Having exhorted them to hasten to enter into God’s rest, and as an inducement citing Christ’s greatness according to His divine nature, the Apostle here does the same in regard to His human nature. He does three things: first, he states His dignity; secondly, he shows his piety (v. 15); thirdly, he urges us to have confidence in Him (v. 16).

234. – He says, therefore: Thus we have said that we can speak to Him, Who is the living Word, the true judge and the high priest, **Since we have a great high priest**: ‘You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedech’ (Ps. 104:4). Nor is He just a high priest, but He is a great one: ‘and the Lord showed me Jesus the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord’ (Zech 3:1) But He is called great, because He is not a high priest of temporal goods only, but of goods to come: ‘but Christ being come a high priest of the good things to come’ (below 9:11). Now two things pertained to a great high priest: one was his office, namely, to enter once a year with blood into the Holy of Holies. But this befits Christ in a special way: for the one enters with blood into a figurative Holy of Holies; but Christ through His own blood entered into the heavenly holy of holies. Hence, he says, ‘who has passed through the heavens’, i.e., He entered by His own power. The second thing is that he should be from a certain tribe, namely, from the stock of Aaron. But this belongs to Christ, Who is of nobler origin; hence, He is called the Son of God: ‘This is my beloved Son’ (Mt. 3:17); ‘You are my son; this day have I begotten you’ (Ps. 2:7). Therefore, because we have this high priest, **let us hold fast our confession**, i.e., let us cling with all our heart, because, as it says in Rom. (10:10): ‘With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.’ But Christ, the greatest high priest, demands this confession: ‘Everyone that shall confess me before men, I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven’ (Mt. 10:32). But he says, **our confession**. This can be understood in two ways: in one way, that the confession, as taken here, is a confession of faith. But faith is the source of hope. But Abraham begot Isaac, i.e., faith begot hope, not as a habit but at to its order to the act. For no one can hope or should hope for anything but what he can obtain. But the fact that we can obtain eternal things is due to faith.

235. – Then when he says, **For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities**, he shows that there is mercy and compassion in Him, lest perhaps anyone suppose that He

cannot do anything but what His justice requires. Here it should be noted that Christ does not merely have the power, but is most ready to have compassion on our infirmities, because He has experienced our wretchedness, which, as God, He knew from all eternity by simple knowledge: ‘The Lord has compassion on them that fear him: for he knows our frame’ (Ps. 102:13).

236. – Hence, he adds, **but as we are, tempted**.

But there are three kinds of temptation: one is from the flesh, namely, when the flesh lusts against the spirit, as it says in Gal (5:17) and this always involves sin, because, as Augustine says, there is one sin in which the flesh lusts against the spirit. But this was not in Christ; hence, he says, without sin, i.e., without the slightest movement of sin: ‘Who did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth’ (1 Pt. 2:22). Therefore, He is called the Lamb of God. Another is temptation either by enticing us with prosperity or by terrifying us with adversity. Now Christ was tempted in those ways: for He was enticed by prosperity. For whatever pertains to prosperity in this life, pertains either to the concupiscence of the flesh, to the concupiscence of the eyes, or to the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16). The devil tempted Him with the first, when he tempted Him to gluttony, which is the mother of lust: ‘If you be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread’ (Mt. 4:3); also to vainglory when he said: ‘All these things will I give you, if falling down you will adore me’ (Mt. 4:9). ‘When all the temptations were over, the devil left him for a time’ (Lk. 4:13). Furthermore, He was tempted by adversity and by the snares laid by the Pharisees, because they wished to ensnare Him in his speech. And by insults: ‘You that destroy the temple of God in three days rebuild it, save your own self’ (Mt. 27:40); and by scourges and torments. Therefore, outside of being tempted without sin, he has been tempted as we are.

237. – He says, **as we are**, which can be explained in two ways: in one way, so that a final cause is designated. As if to say: He was tempted in order to give us an example how to handle temptation: ‘Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps’ (1 Pt. 2:21). Or so that the consequent is denoted: as if to say: He was tempted in order that He might be like as we are in all things, except sin. For if he had existed without temptations, He would not have experienced them, and then He could not have compassion. But if He had sinned, He would not have been able to help us, but would need help.

238. – Then when he says, **Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace**, he urges us to have confidence in him. As if to say: Since He can have compassion, let us go with confidence: ‘Behold, God is my savior; I will deal confidently and will not fear’ (Is. 12:2). Let us go, I say, to the throne. The king’s seat is called a throne. But Christ is king: ‘The king will reign and he will be wise’ (Jer. 23:5). But this throne has a twofold state: one, of justice in the future: ‘You have sat on the throne, who judge justice’ (Ps. 9:5). This will occur in the future: ‘When I shall take a time, I will judge justice’ (Ps. 74:3). The other throne is that of grace, which is meant here; hence, he adds, of his grace, namely, in the present, which is the time of mercy: ‘He shall give equal grace to the grace thereof’ (Zech 4:7). But by the grace

of Christ we are freed of all misery, because we are freed from sin, which makes people wretched; hence, he says, that we may obtain mercy. Furthermore, by the grace of Christ we are aided in doing good; hence he says, **and find grace**; ‘You have found grace with God’ (Lk. 1:30); and this to help in time of need, i.e., to do good: ‘My help is from the Lord’ (Ps. 120:2). But that help comes through grace: ‘I have labored more abundantly than all they’ (1 Cor. 15:10). But this should come at a seasonable time; hence, he says, in time of need: ‘There is a time and opportunity for every business’ (Ec. 8:6). This is the present time, which is the time of mercy.

5-1

Heb 5:1-7

¹For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; ⁶as he says also in another place, “You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.” ⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear.

239. – As we have said at the beginning of this epistle, the Apostle’s intention is to show that Christ is more excellent than all those from whom the Law derives authority, namely, the angels, by whose ministry it was given: ‘Being ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator’ (Gal. 3:19), and Moses, who was the law-giver: ‘The law was given by Moses’ (Jn. 1:17) and the priesthood and high priesthood of Aaron, by whom the Law was administered. Having finished the first two he now deals with the third, namely, the excellence of Christ’s priesthood over that of Aaron. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that Christ is a high priest; secondly, that He is more excellent than the high priest of the Old Law (chap. 7). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that Christ is a high priest; secondly, he prepares his hearers for what follows (v. 11). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows what is required of a high priest; secondly, that these are found in Christ, and concludes that He is a high priest (v. 5). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he describes the high priest’s office; secondly, he shows the compassion necessary in a high priest (v. 2); thirdly, he shows the way of attaining the high priesthood (v. 4).

240. – Regarding the office he mentions four things: first, the loftiness of this office: chosen from among men; secondly, its usefulness: appointed to act on behalf of men; thirdly, the material: in relation to God; fourthly, the action: to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

241. – He says, therefore: This office suits a man, but not an angel. Hence, he says that we have a great high priest and He is Christ: **For every high priest chosen from among men**, ought to be a man. But God willed that man have someone like himself to whom he might run. Hence, the Church, too, has ordained that when someone from the college is found useful, a foreigner should not be chosen: ‘I will give her vine-dressers out of the same place’ (Hos. 2:15); ‘You shall set him whom the Lord, your God, shall choose out of the number of your brethren. You may not make a man of another nation king that is

not your brother' (Dt. 17:15). But he is chosen from, because he should excel the others, as Saul did (1 Sam. 10:23). Accordingly, Christ asks Peter, whom He wished to set over the others, if he loved Him more than the others (Jn. 21:15).

242. – The end and utility is that he is appointed to act on behalf of men, i.e., for their benefit. He is not appointed for glory or for accumulating riches or for enriching his family: 'And ourselves, your servants through Jesus' (2 Cor. 4:5); 'According to the power which the Lord has given me unto edification and not unto destruction' (2 Cor. 13:10). But if he seeks his own, he is not a shepherd, but a hireling.

243. – The nature of the dignity is that the high priest is set over the others. For just as a leader or ruler is set over a city, so the high priest in the things that appertain to God: 'You shall be to him in things that pertain to God' (Ex. 4:16); 'for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications' (2 Cor. 10:4). Therefore, just as the things which pertain to the worship of God transcend temporal things, so the pontifical dignity exceeds all other dignities. Therefore, high priests should not entangle themselves with secular business and neglect the things that pertain to God: 'No man being a soldier to Christ entangles himself with secular businesses' (2 Tim. 2:4).

244. – The act of the high priest is to offer gifts, i.e., voluntary oblations, not extorted: 'Of every man that offers of his own accord, you shall take them' (Ex. 25:2) and sacrifices for sins, i.e., which are offered to him to satisfy for sins: 'The priest shall pray for him and for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him' (Lev 4:26). This indicates that everything offered, whether voluntary or under vow or for satisfaction, shall be offered according to the disposition of the prelate.

245. – Then (v. 2) he shows what is required in the exercise of the high priesthood, namely, pity. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows that for the exercise of the high priesthood mercy and compassion are required; secondly, a merciful motive (v. 2b); thirdly, the sign of mercy (v. 3).

246. – He says therefore: I say that he must be in the things that appertain to God; yet he should be mediator between man and God: 'I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you at that time' (Dt. 5:5). Therefore, just as he should by the devotion of prayer reach God as one extreme, so by mercy and compassion he should reach man, the other extreme. Hence, he says: who can have compassion on the ignorant and wayward: 'Who is weak and I am not weak?' (2 Cor. 11:29). On the other hand: 'They are not concerned for the affliction of Joseph' (Am 6:6). But defects are of two kinds: some fail from ignorance; hence, he says, **on the ignorant**. But to be ignorant is, properly speaking, to lack knowledge of things one ought to know. Others fall from certain knowledge, and in regard to this he says, and are wayward, i.e., err.

247. – The motive for mercy is mentioned when he says, **became he himself is beset with infirmity**. That motive is infirmity, and those who are sometimes infirm: ‘But we have this treasure in earthen vessels’ (2 Cor. 4:7). The reason for this is that he may have compassion on the infirmities of others. This is the reason why the Lord permitted Peter to fall: ‘Judge of the disposition of your neighbor by yourself’ (Sir. 31:18). Therefore, he says, because he himself is beset with infirmity, namely, as to penalties and guilt: ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak’ (Ps. 6:3); ‘for I am a weak man and of short time and falling short of the understanding of judgment and laws’ (Wis. 9:5). And note that he says, **beset**. For carnal men have the weakness of sin within themselves, because they are not subject to sin; and they are also beset by the weakness of the flesh: ‘Therefore, I myself with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin’ (Rom. 7:25).

248. – But the sign of this is that even in the Old Law (Lev 9), as well as now, as is clear from the canon of the Mass: ‘And to us sinners’, it has been decreed that the priest offer also for himself, which he would not do, unless he were oppressed by the weakness of sins, with which he is beset. Indeed, if he is in mortal sin, he should not celebrate. And therefore, he says: **Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people**.

249. – Then he describes how one goes about attaining to the priesthood when he says, **And one does not take the honor upon himself**. For it is contrary to nature for anything to raise itself to a higher state than its nature, as air does not make itself fire, but is made so by something higher. Hence, God’s discipline does not allow anyone to take the honor to himself, by favor, money, or power: ‘Have we not taken unto us honors by our own strength?’ (Am 6:14); ‘They have reigned, but not by me’ (Hos 8:4), but is called by God, as Aaron was.

Therefore, the Lord confirmed his priesthood with a rod which flowered. Hence, those should be accepted who do not impose themselves. Hence, in olden times they were indicated by a visible sign, as was St. Nicholas and many others.

250. – Then (v. 5) he shows how Christ is high priest. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that the aforesaid belongs to Christ; secondly, from this he draws a conclusion (v. 10). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows that Christ was made a high priest not by Himself but by God; secondly, he treats of His office (v. 7); thirdly, of his mercy (v. 8). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that Christ did not promote himself; secondly, by whom He was promoted (v. 5b).

251. – He says, therefore: **so also Christ did not exalt himself**. Here it should be noted that he does not say that He did not make Himself a priest, but that he did not exalt himself to be made a high priest. For there are some who exalt themselves to become a priest, as hypocrites who demonstrate certain qualities, in order to be chosen or to obtain prebends. Yet no one makes himself high priest. But Christ not only did not make Himself high priest, he did not exalt himself to be made high priest: ‘I seek not my own glory;

there is one that seeks and judges' (Jn. 8:50), and later: 'It is my Father that glorifies me' (Jn. 8:54). This is true, insofar as He is man, because as God He has the same glory as the Father.

252. – Then (v. 5b) he shows by whom he was promoted. First, he shows by Whom He was glorified; secondly, how He was appointed high priest (v. 8b). But He was glorified by the divine judgment, because the Lord spoke to Him in Ps. 2 (v. 7): 'You are my son: This day I have begotten you', and in Mt. (3:17): 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' Therefore, when He shows Him begotten from eternity, He shows His glory: 'Who, being the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance' (above 1:3). As man He also receives the high priesthood from God: as he says also in another place: 'You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedech'. But the Apostle uses the authority of the Palms as being more famous and more often consulted. He says, **priest**, because He offered Himself to God the Father: 'He loved us and gave himself for us an oblation and offering to God' (Eph. 5:2). But lest anyone suppose the priesthood of Christ is that of the Old Law, he distinguishes the former on two points: first, its authority, because it is for ever, whereas the other was temporary and passed away with the coming of the One prefigured. Likewise, its victim has the power to bring one to eternal life, and it lasts for every. Secondly, its ritual, because animals were offered in the one, but bread and wine here; hence, he says, according to the order of Melchizedech.

253. – Then (v. 7) he shows that what pertains to the priestly office belongs to Christ: first, he shows his condition; secondly, His act (v. 7b); thirdly, His efficacy (v. 7c).

254. – His condition was that He was taken from men, because, as has been stated, a high priest is taken from among men. Therefore, he says, **who in the days of his flesh**. Here flesh is taken for the entire human nature: 'The Word was made flesh' (Jn. 1:14). But are the days of His flesh no longer here? It seems that they are, for it says in Luke (24:39): 'A spirit has not flesh and bone, as you see me to have.' Why, then, is the time before His Passion and resurrection considered the time of his flesh more than now? I answer that flesh stands for the weakness of the flesh, as in 1 Cor. (15:50): 'Flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God.' But before the Passion Christ had weak and corruptible flesh. Therefore, he says, **in the days of his flesh**, i.e., in which He wore flesh similar to the sinner, but not sinful.

255. – His act was to offer prayers and supplications, which is the spiritual sacrifice Christ offered. But they are called prayers, i.e., petitions: 'The continual prayer of a just man avails much' (Jas. 5:16). They are also called supplications on account of the humility of the one praying: 'He fell upon his face, praying' (Mt. 26:39). To whom? To God the Father, **who was able to save him from death**. He was able to do this in two ways: in one way, by saving Him from death: 'Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will' (Mt. 26:39). In another way, by raising Him up: 'Because you will not leave my soul in hell' (Ps. 15:10); and again: 'But you, O Lord, have mercy on me

and raise me up again' (Ps. 40:11). The priesthood of Christ is ordained to that spiritual sacrifice: hence, He was appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins: 'The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me' (Ps. 49:23); 'We will render the calves of our lips' (Hos 14:3).

256. – His efficacy is shown by the way He prays. But two things are necessary in one who prays, namely, fervent love along with pain and groans. These are mentioned in Ps. 37 (v. 10): 'Lord, all my desire is before you, as to the first, and my groaning is not hidden from you', as to the second. But Christ had these two. Therefore, in regard to the first he says, **with loud cries**, i.e., with a most efficacious intention: 'And being in an agony, he prayed the longer' (Lk. 22:43). Again, in Luke (23:46): 'and crying with a loud voice, he said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Because of the second he says, **and tears**: for by tears the Apostle means the internal groans of the one praying. But this is not mentioned in the Gospel; but it is probably that just as He wept at the resurrection of Lazarus, so also during His Passion. For He did many things that are not written. But He did not weep for Himself, but for us whom the Passion was to benefit: although it did benefit Him, inasmuch as He merited exaltation by it: 'For which cause God has exalted him and given Him a name which is above every name' (Phil. 2:9). Therefore, **he was heard for his godly fear**, which He had toward God: 'And he filled him with the spirit of the fear of the Lord' (Is. 11:3).

257. – Nevertheless, it seems that He was not heard; first, for Himself, because the chalice did not pass from Him; secondly, for the others from whom He begged forgiveness: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Lk. 23:34). I answer that Christ was heard in regard to everything He wished. But it was under the influence of the sensitive appetite and of the will acting as a natural appetite that He shrank from death. It was under these influences that He prayed and thus showed Himself true man. But under the influence of the will informed by reason He willed to die; hence he says: 'Not at I will, but as your will' (Mt. 26:39). Furthermore, He did not wish to forgive all of them, but only those who believed; and many were converted later.

5-2

Heb 5:8-14

⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. ¹¹About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food; ¹³for every one who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

258. – Having listed three things which pertain to a high priest and showed that two of them were verified, namely, the office and the proper way of attaining it, the Apostle now considers the third thing which a high priest should have, namely, mercy and compassion. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows what He suffered; secondly, what benefits accrued even to others (v. 9).

259. – He says, therefore: I have stated that a high priest should be such as to be able to have compassion. But Christ is such a high priest. For since He is the Son of God from all eternity, and, therefore, could not suffer or have compassion, He assumed a nature in which He would suffer and even have compassion. And this is what He says, namely, **although he was a Son** from all eternity, **He learned obedience** from time.

But only the ignorant can learn; whereas Christ, being God from all eternity, had fullness of knowledge from the very instant of His conception as man. Therefore, He was not ignorant of anything; consequently, He could not learn. I answer that knowledge is of two sorts: the first is that of simple recognition, according to which the objection is valid, because He was not ignorant of anything. But there is also the knowledge gained by experience, according to which He learned obedience; hence, he says, **He learned obedience through what he suffered**, i.e., experienced. And the Apostle speaks thus, because one who learns something comes voluntarily to learn it. But Christ accepted our weakness voluntarily; consequently, he says that 'he learned obedience', i.e., how difficult it is to obey, because He obeyed in the most difficult matters, even to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8). This shows how difficult the good of obedience is, because those who have not experienced obedience and have not learned it in difficult matters, believe that obedience is very easy. But in order to know what obedience is, one must learn to obey in difficult matters, and one who has not learned to subject himself by obeying does not know how to rule others well. Therefore, although Christ knew by simple recognition what obedience is, He nevertheless learned obedience from the things He suffered, i.e., from difficult things, by suffering and dying: 'By the obedience of one many shall be made just' (Rom. 5:19).

260. – Then when he says, **and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him**, he mentions the fruit of His Passion, namely, in Christ and in His members. In Christ the fruit was glorification; hence, he says, and being made perfect, for from the instant of His conception He was perfectly consummated as to the happiness of His soul, inasmuch as it was drawn to God; but he still had a nature that could suffer, although after His Passion He could not suffer. Therefore, because in this respect He was altogether perfect, He could perfect others. For it is the nature of a perfect thing to be able to engender its like. Therefore, he says that He was perfect. For since He arrived at that consummation by the merit of obedience: ‘The obedient man shall speak of victory’ (Pr. 21:28), **he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him**, not temporal salvation but eternal: ‘Israel is saved by the Lord with an eternal salvation (Is. 45:17).

261. – Therefore he says, **being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedech**.

262. – Then (v. 11) he prepares the souls of his hearers for what is to follow. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows their slowness; secondly, his intention (chap. 6). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the importance of what is to be said; secondly, their slowness to understand (v. 11b).

263. – He says, therefore: Thus I have said that He was called a high priest: **About this we have much to say**: ‘Hear, for I will speak of great things’ (Pr. 8:6). They are great, because they deal with the salvation of souls: ‘A faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners’ (1 Tim. 1:15). **About this we have much to say which is hard to explain**, meaning that it cannot be perfectly explained, for no words can express the things of Christ: ‘Glorify the Lord as much as you ever can, for he will yet far exceed, and his magnificence is wonderful. Blessing the Lord, exalt him as much as you can, for he is above all praise’ (Sir. 43:32). Or, **we have much to say which is hard to explain**, i.e., it needs to be interpreted because of its height and magnitude and depth: ‘He shall understand a parable and the interpretation, the words of the wise and their mysterious saying’ (Pr. 1:6). For the interpretation of Scripture is listed among the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:10).

264. – It also needs to be interpreted because of our slowness: **you have become dull of hearing**. Those who are weak of intellect cannot understand profound things, unless they are explained in detail: ‘I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now’ (Jn. 16:12); ‘I could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal’ (1 Cor. 3:1).

265. – Then (v. 12) he shows that their slowness is culpable. In regard to this he does three things: first, he mentions the sin of slowness; secondly, he applies a simile (v. 12c); thirdly, he explains it (v. 13).

266. – For it is a sin, when a person has listened a long time, if he is still slow; but not if he is a recent hearer. For negligence is not without sin; hence, he says, **for though by this time you ought to be teachers**, namely, of others, for this time during which they had heard the law and the prophets: ‘Search the Scriptures, for you find in them to have life everlasting’ (Jn. 5:31); and Christ Himself and the apostles and many converted by them: ‘Have I been so long a time with you, and have you not known me?’ (Jn. 14:9), **you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God’s word**. For the principles are the first things taught in grammar, i.e., the letters themselves. Therefore, the beginnings of the words of God, the first principles and elements, are the articles of faith and the precepts of the Decalogue. If a person, therefore, had studied theology a long time and failed to learn these, time would be running against him. Therefore, he says, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God’s word, i.e., the elements: ‘Ever learning and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth’ (2 Tim. 3:7); ‘For the child shall die one hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be left accursed’ (Is. 65:20).

267. – Then (v. 12b) he describes their situation with a simile. Therefore, it should be noted that sacred doctrine is, as it were, the food of the soul: ‘With the bread of life and understanding she shall feed him’ (Sir. 15:3) and in (24:29): ‘They that eat me shall yet hunger, and they that drink me shall yet thirst.’ Sacred doctrine, therefore, is food and drink, because it nourishes the soul. For the other sciences only enlighten the soul, but this one enlightens: ‘The commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes’ (Ps. 18:9) and nourishes and strengthens the soul. But in bodily food there is a difference: for children make use of one food and the perfect of another. For children use milk as being thinner and more connatural and easily digestible; but adults use more solid food. So in Sacred Scripture, those who are beginners should listen to easy things, which are like milk; but the learned should hear more difficult things. Therefore, he says, **you need milk**, namely, as children: ‘As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation’ (1 Pt. 2:2); ‘I give you milk to drink, not meat’ (1 Cor. 3:2). And this is what follows, **and not solid food**, i.e., lofty doctrine, which is concerned with the mysteries and secrets of God, which strengthen and confirm.

268. – Then (v. 13) he explains the simile: first he explains what he said about milk; secondly, about solid food: (v. 14). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he gives the explanation; secondly, the reason behind the explanation (v. 13b).

269. – He says, therefore: So I say that you need milk as little children: **for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness**, i.e., everyone that must be nourished with milk is unskillful, i.e., cannot have part in understanding the words of justice perfectly: ‘unless your justice be more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt. 5:20); ‘In abundant justice there is the greatest strength’ (Pr. 15:55). But children are not partakers of such things: ‘Whom

shall he teach knowledge' and whom shall he make to understand the hearing? Them that are weaned from the milk, that are drawn away from the breasts' (Is. 28:9).

270. – But the Apostle had delivered many difficult things to them, namely, the mystery of the Trinity and the sacrament of the Incarnation, and many other lofty things. Therefore, either they were not children, or such things ought not have been delivered to children. I answer, according to Augustine, that in the teachings of faith we should not suppose that some things are taught to the perfect and other things to the imperfect, for there is not such a difference between them: for the same things should be delivered to both. But they should be merely proposed to little ones and not explained or enlarged upon, because their minds would falter instead of being elevated.

271. – According to a Gloss, an example of milk would be that the Word was made flesh. But that seems to be just as hard to understand as that the Word was with God. Hence Augustine says that the latter is found in Plato's works, but not the former. But he, said Augustine, could not have suspected something contained in the mystery of the Word made flesh. I answer that to know by simple faith that the Word was made flesh is quite easy, because it can be imagined and to a certain extent sensed; but that the Word was with God is something that transcends all sensing and can be grasped by reason alone, and that with great difficulty.

272. – Then he assigns the reason when he says, **for he is a child**, not in age but in sense: For someone is a little child in humility: 'You have revealed them to little ones' (Mt. 11:25); in age: 'As long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a servant' (Gal. 4:1); in sense: 'Do not become children in sense, but in malice be children and in sense be perfect' (1 Cor. 14:20). This is the way children is taken here.

273. – Then when he says, **but solid food is for the mature**, he explains what he had said about solid food. For this is evident in bodily food: when a man reaches maturity, he uses stronger and nobler and more solid food. But a spiritual man, when he has reached spiritual perfection, should have a more solid doctrine proposed to him. But perfection is of two kinds: one is perfection of intellect, when a person has the wisdom to discern and judge correctly about matters proposed to him; the other is perfection of love, which charity produces, and it is present when a person adheres entirely to God. Hence, after laying down the precepts of charity, the Lord continues: 'Be you, therefore, perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect' (Mt. 5:48). But perfection of charity, as Augustine says, is present when there is no covetousness. For the closer a person comes to God, the more he scorns temporal things: 'For what have I in heaven? and besides you what do I desire upon earth. For you my flesh and my heart have fainted away: you are the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever' (Ps. 73:25-26). For the doctrine of Sacred Scripture contains matters not only for speculation, as in geometry, but also matters to be accepted by the will; hence it is stated in Matthew (5:19): 'He that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.' Therefore, in the other sciences it is enough that they perfect man's intellect, but in

this one it is required that he be perfected in intellect and will. Therefore, lofty mysteries should be proposed to the perfect: ‘Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect’ (1 Cor. 2:6). For a person judges things according to his condition; thus, an angry person judges things one way when he is angry, and another way when he is calm. Similarly, an incontinent person judges that something is good when he is passionate, and otherwise when the passion has subsided. Consequently, the Philosopher says that a person is, so his end appears to be. And because the things taught in Sacred Scripture pertain to the will and not only to the intellect, a person must be perfect in both. Consequently, the Apostle, desiring to show who are the mature, to whom solid food should be given, says that they are the ones **who have their faculties trained** [senses exercised].

274. – And he is speaking properly, because, as the Philosopher says, the intellect, inasmuch as it judges about things to be desired and to be done, is considered a sense, because it is related to something particular. Hence the word, sense, is not taken here as referring to an external sense. Therefore, one who senses the things of God is perfect: ‘Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded’ (Phil. 3:15); ‘But we have the sense of Christ’ (1 Cor. 2:16) But those who sense only carnal things cannot be pleasing to God, as is clear in Rom. (chap. 8). The second thing to be considered is the disposition of the one in whom it is, because he should be exercised: ‘Exercise yourself unto godliness’ (1 Tim. 4:7). For one who is not exercised cannot form a correct judgment, which is required for perfection: ‘A man that has much experience shall think of many things’ (Sir. 34:9); on the other hand, one who is inexperienced knows few things. Thirdly, the cause of this exercise is custom, not idleness but abundance of activity; hence, he says, **by custom**, namely, of acting properly: ‘A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it’ (Pr. 22:6). Therefore, if you wish to be perfect, do not give yourself to idleness, but accustom yourself to what is good from your youth. Fourthly, the end of this exercise, namely, **to distinguish good from evil**. For a person is perfect, when he discerns between good and evil, between good and better, and between evil and worse. For many things seem good but are really evil: ‘There is a way which seems just to a man: but the ends thereof lead to death’ (Pr. 14:12). It is in these matters, therefore, that correct judgment is needed.

6-1

Heb 6:1-6a

¹Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And this we will do if God permits. ⁴For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account

275. – Having mentioned the priesthood of Christ according to the order of Melchizedek and scolded the slowness of those to whom he was writing, the Apostle now returns to his theme, in regard to which he does three things: first, he discloses his intention; secondly, its difficulty (v.3); thirdly, he declares his intention (v.9). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he discloses his intention; secondly, he explains what he says (v.1b).

276. – His intention is that passing over the things which pertain to the beginning of Christian doctrine, he may go on to loftier matters; hence he says: I have stated that strong meat is for the perfect: Therefore, **let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ**, through which Christ begins to exist in us, which is by the doctrine of faith: ‘That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17); **let us go on to maturity**, i.e., to things which look toward the perfection of Christ’s doctrine: ‘When I became a man, I put away the things of a child’ (1 Cor. 13:11). According to a Gloss this can refer to two things, namely, either to the intellect, so that as a person advances in age, he should put away childish things and devote himself to what is perfect: ‘howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect’ (1 Cor. 2:6), or to the will, and then the sense is that one should not remain a beginner, but tend to the state of the perfect: ‘Walk before me and be perfect’ (Gen. 17:1).

277. – Here two objections arise: the first is based on his saying, **let us leave the elementary doctrines** [leaving the word of the beginning]. For the beginning should never be forsaken: ‘And I said, Now have I begun’ (Ps. 76:11); ‘My justification, which I have begun to hold’ (Jb. 27:6). I answer that there are two ways of forsaking a beginning: one is according to evaluation, and in this way a man should always be a beginner tending to what is higher: ‘Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I many by any means apprehend’ (Phil. 3:12). The other is according to progress toward perfection, and in this way a man should always strive to pass to the perfect state: ‘Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before’ (Phil. 3:13). For, as Bernard says, not to progress in the way of God is to fall behind.

278. – The other objection is concerned with the invitation, **let us go on to maturity** [things more perfect]. For perfection consists in the counsels: ‘If you would be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor’ (Mt. 19:21). But not all are bound by the counsels. I answer that there are two kinds of perfection: one is external and consists in external acts, which are signs of what is internal, such as virginity and voluntary poverty. To this perfection not all are bound. The other is internal and consists in the love of God and neighbor: ‘Have charity which is the bond of perfection’ (Col. 3:14). Not all are bound to this perfection, but all are bound to tend toward it; because if a person no longer desired to love God more, he would not be doing what charity requires. But he says, **let us go on**, and this by following the impulse of the Holy Spirit: ‘Whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God’ (Rom. 8:14). Or they are as though carried by God Who bears our infirmities: ‘Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who are carried by my bowels’ (Is. 46:3); or, as carried by one another: ‘Bear you one another’s burdens’ (Gal. 6:2).

279. – The when he says, **not laying again the foundation of penance**, he explains what he has said. Here he intends to show what the things for which make for the beginning of Christ’s doctrine. For this he uses a simile. For it is by faith that a soul is built into a spiritual edifice. Therefore, just as in a material building the foundation is laid first, so here the first rudiments of Christ’s doctrine are, as it were, the foundation.

But this seems to conflict with what he teaches below in chapter 11, where faith is set down as the foundation: for faith is one: ‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph. 4:5). But here he mentions six foundations. I answer that faith is the foundation of the virtues, but the things he mentions are the foundations of Christ’s doctrine.

He says, **not laying again the foundation of penance**, as though it were laid so firmly that there is not need to lay it again. Or, because you have just laid it and should not be laid again

280. – But the Apostle lists them quite clearly. For just as in the process of generation and of any motion there is first of all the departure so too here; because penance is a departure from sin and is, as it were, the foundation of that life. For, according to Augustine, no one who is master of his own will can begin a new life without repenting of the past. Hence, at the beginning of His preaching the Lord says: ‘Do penance’ (Mt. 4:17). Therefore, he says, **of penance from dead works**. For works are called dead either because they are dead in themselves, or because they become dead. A thing is said to be alive, when it functions on its own power, so that wherever it fails, it is said to be dead. For our works are ordained to happiness, which is man’s end; therefore, when they do not lead to happiness or cannot be ordained to happiness, they are said to be dead: and these are works performed in mortal sin: ‘The blood of Christ who by the Holy Spirit offered himself unspotted to God, will cleanse our conscience from dead works’ (Heb. 9:14). But works performed in charity are made dead by sin; hence, they do not have the power to merit eternal

life: ‘All the justices which he has done will not be remembered’ (Ez. 18:24). But penance makes them revive; hence they are then once more counted for eternal life.

281. – But in approaching the desired terminus, faith is first; hence, he says, **the foundation of faith toward God**. For it is proper to faith that man believe and assent to things unseen by him, on the authority of another. But this testimony is either from man alone, and then it does not pertain to the virtue of faith, because man can deceive and be deceived; or that testimony is from God’s judgement, and then it is most true and firm, because it comes from the Truth itself, which cannot deceive or be deceived. Hence, he says, towards God, i.e., the assent is made to what God says: ‘You believe in God; believe also in me’ (Jn. 14:1).

282. – The second thing in that process are the sacraments of faith. But these are two sacraments of those entering: for those are the only ones the Apostle is discussing here. The first is baptism, by which are reborn; the second is confirmation, by which we are strengthened.

283. – In regard to the first he says, of baptism.

But this seems contrary to what is stated in Ephesians (4:5): ‘One faith, one baptism.’ Therefore, there are not several baptisms. I answer that there are three kinds of baptism, namely, of water, of desire, and of blood. But the last two have no force, unless they are referred to the first, because the first one must be intended, if it cannot be actually received by a person with the use of freedom. Hence, there are not three sacraments, but one sacrament, by which we are reborn unto salvation: ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Jn. 3:5). Of the other two, baptism of blood produces more of baptism’s effects, provided that the first is desired, or the opposite is not present in the mind, as is clear in the case of the Holy Innocents, who were not of an opposite mind. For baptism has its power from the merit of Christ’s Passion: ‘All we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his blood’ (Rom. 6:3). Therefore, just as one who is baptized is conformed sacramentally to Christ’s death, so the martyr is conformed really. Therefore, the baptism of blood produces the total effect of baptism in the sense of washing away all guilt and punishment for sin; but it does not imprint a character. Therefore, if one who had undergone martyrdom without baptism of water were to rise, he would have to be baptized. Penance, however, does not produce as many of baptism’s effects, because it does not take away all punishment, although it takes away all guilt. But just as a martyr conforms himself to Christ’s Passion by external suffering, so a penitent by internal suffering: ‘They that are Christ’s have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences’ (Gal. 5:24). Therefore, penance can be so great that it would remove all guilt and punishment, as happened to the good thief and to Magdalene. Hence, penance is called baptism, inasmuch as it performs the function of baptism. And because baptism cannot be repeated, penance was instituted. Therefore, the others are called baptisms, because they produce the effect of baptism; but there is only one baptism, because the others produce no effect, unless the first is intended.

284. – The second sacrament of those who are entering is imposed by the laying on of hands; hence, he says, and laying on of hands. But this is twofold: one is productive of miracles, as when Christ cured the sick by laying his hands on them: ‘He, laying his hands on everyone of them, cured them’ (Lk. 4:40). And this is not sacramental. But the other is sacramental and is found in two sacraments: first, in the sacrament of Orders: ‘Impose not hands lightly on anyone’ (1 Tim. 5:22); secondly, in the sacrament of confirmation unto renovation: ‘By the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Spirit’ (Tit. 3:5). For in confirmation the Holy Spirit is given for strength to enable a man to boldly confess Christ’s name before men. For just as in the natural order a man is first born and then grows and becomes strong, so, too, in the order of grace.

285. – Thirdly, there follows the terminus of motion, at which the motion is terminated. This is twofold: the first is the resurrection of bodies, which is the foundation of faith, because without it our faith is in vain (1 Cor. 15:14). Therefore, he says, **of the resurrection of the dead**. Secondly, we expect a reward, which is conferred by the judge: ‘All things that are done, God will bring into judgement’ (Ec. 12:14); therefore, he says, **and of eternal judgement**: not that that judgement will last a thousand years, as Lactantius taught, because it will last but a moment. But it is called eternal, because the sentence passed then will last for ever: ‘These shall go into eternal punishment, but the just into eternal life’ (Mt. 15:46). It should be noted that all the things he says he desires to treat here are, as it were, the rudiments of the faith; hence he preaches them to newcomers, as is recorded in Ac (17:18) and in other places.

286. – Then (v. 3) he shows how difficult it is to carry out his intention. For it is difficult both in itself and in relation to his hearers. Hence he does three things: first, he suggests that in this he especially needs divine help; secondly, he mentions their weakness (v. 4); thirdly, he proposes a simile (v. 7).

287. – He says, therefore: Let us go on to things more perfect, **and this shall we do, if God permit**. He says less than he means, for it is not only necessary that God permit, but He must do all things: ‘In his hand are both we and our words’ (Wis. 7:16). Therefore, he must place all things under the confidence of divine help: ‘Without me you can do nothing’ (Jn. 16:5); ‘For you should say: If the Lord will, and if we shall live, we do this or that’ (Jas. 4:15).

288. – Then when he says, **it is impossible**, he shows their weakness. For they were weak in hearing. For just as in material things no state is so dangerous as that of a recidivus, so in spiritual things one who falls into sin after grace rises with more difficulty. In regard to this he does three things: first, he lists the good things they had received; secondly, the difficulty caused in them from being recidivi (v. 6); thirdly, he assigns the reason (v. 6b).

289. – Some of the goods are present and some future. But in the present they had spiritual rebirth; in regard to this he says **enlightened**, namely by baptism. And baptism is fittingly called an enlightenment, because it is the beginning of spiritual rebirth, in which the intellect is enlightened by faith: ‘You were heretofore darkness but now light in the Lord’ (Eph. 5:8). They are also partakers of God’s goods; hence he says, **who have tasted the heavenly gift**. That gift is grace and is called heavenly, because God gave it from heaven: ‘God gave gifts to men’ (Ps. 67:19); ‘Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from Father of lights’ (Jas. 1:17). They are also partakers of the divine goodness: ‘For by whom he has given most great and precious promises’ (2 Pt. 1:4). Therefore, he says, **and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit**. For all gifts are given from love; therefore, he attributes that participation to the Holy Spirit. For to participate is to take a part. But Christ alone had the Holy Spirit in fulness: ‘God does not give the Spirit by measure’ (Jn. 3:24). For the other saints received of His fulness and were made partakers not of His substance, but of His distributions: ‘There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit’ (1 Cor. 12:4). Also in the present day they had instruction of His doctrine; hence, he says, **and have tasted the goodness of the word of God**. That word is called good, because it is the word of eternal life: ‘Lord, to whom shall we go; you have the words of eternal life’ (Jn. 6:69); ‘How sweet are your words to my palate’ (Ps. 119:103). But he says, **tasted**, because it not only enlightens the intellect, but also refreshes the affections, in which there is a certain savoring: ‘Taste and see that the Lord is sweet’ (Ps. 33:8).

290. – ‘We are saved by hope’ (Rom. 8:24). Therefore, he says, **and the powers of the age to come**. But some of these they have not only in hope, by in an inchoate way, and these are the endowments of the soul, namely, vision, possession, and fruition, and these are possessed inchoatively inasmuch as faith, hope and charity, which correspond to them, are possessed in the present. But the others are goods possessed only in hope, as the endowments of the body, namely, subtilty, agility, impassability and clarity.

291. – Then when he says, **and then commit apostasy**, he shows the difficulty in rising, after one has fallen. Here it should be noted that he does not say, ‘fallen’, but ‘fallen away’, i.e. completely fallen, because if they had merely fallen, it should not be difficult to rise: ‘A just man shall fall seven times, and shall rise again’ (Pr. 24:16). But if the Apostle had said it is impossible for those who have fallen away to rise again, then it might be said that in this he was signifying how extremely difficult it is to rise, both because of sin and because of pride, as in the devils. But because he says that those who have once fallen away cannot be renewed unto penance, and there is no sin in this world that man cannot repent of, there must be another explanation.

Hence, it should be noted that a certain Novatian, who was a priest of the church in Rome, made this the occasion of his error. For he declared that no one could rise to penance after baptism. But this opinion is false, as Athanasius says in a letter to Serapion, because Paul himself received the incestuous Corinthians, as shown in 2 Cor (chap. 2); and likewise in Gal (4:19), because he says: ‘My little children,

of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you.’ Therefore, it must be understood, as Augustine says, that he does not say that it is impossible to repent, but that it is impossible to be renewed again, i.e., baptized: ‘By the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Spirit’ (Tit 3:5). For a man could never repent in such a way that he could be baptized again. The Apostle says this because according to the Law, the Jews were baptized frequently, as is shown in Mark (chap. 7). Consequently, it was in order to remove that error that the Apostle says this.

292. – Then when he says, **since they crucify the Son of God on their own account**, he gives the reason why baptism cannot be repeated, namely because baptism is a configuration to Christ’s death, as is clear from Romans (6:13); ‘all we who are baptized in Christ, are baptized in his death.’ But this death is not repeated, because ‘Christ rising again from the dead, dies now no more’ (Rom. 6:9). Therefore, those who are repeatedly baptized crucify Christ again. Or, another way, it denotes that it is repugnant to Christ’s grace for people to sin frequently and then be baptized again. Then the emphasis is not on the repetition of baptism, but on the falling away of the sinner, who, as far as in him lies, crucifies Christ again: ‘Christ died once for our sins’ (1 Pt. 3:18). Therefore, when you sin after baptism, then as far as in you lies, you give occasion for Christ to be crucified again; and in this way hold him up to contempt and stain yourself, washed in His blood: ‘He loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood’ (Rev. 1:15).

6-2

Heb 6:6b-8

^{6b}since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt. ⁷For land which has drunk the rain that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned.

293. – Having showed the difficulty involved in pursuing his intention, a difficulty arising from their guilt, the Apostle now resorts to a simile to explain this: first, in regard to good earth; secondly, in regard to bad earth (v. 8).

294. – But it should be noted that according to one explanation the Apostle wished to show by the above that those who have been baptized once cannot be baptized again or be renewed again to penance in another life: ‘Whatsoever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly: for neither work nor reason nor wisdom nor knowledge shall be in hell, whither you are hastening’ (Ec. 9:10): ‘The night comes when no man can work’ (Jn. 9:4). Therefore, let it be explained once more, i.e., after this life, and there is a reason for this. For two things cause penance: one is that which gives it efficacy, namely, the merit of Christ’s Passion: ‘He is the propitiation for our sins’ (1 Jn. 2:2). The other is the example of penance, which we have in Christ by considering His austerity, poverty, and Passion: ‘Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps’ (1 Pt. 2:21). Thus, therefore, is understood what he says, **crucifying again**, i.e., receiving the fruit of the cross of Christ, and this in regard to that which gives efficacy to penance; **and hold him up to contempt** as to the example of repenting.

295. – But the simile which is presented here about the earth can be connected to that which was stated above, let us go on to things more perfect, and then the sense will be: If we go on we will have a blessing like the good earth; or it can be connected with what was just said according to both explanations, either about baptism or about the other life. The one about baptism is more literal and then the sense is: Just as the cultivated earth, if it brings forth thorns again, is not cultivated but is burned, so a man who sins after baptism is not washed again.

296. – In regard to the good earth he mentions three things: first, the benefit bestowed; secondly, the fruit it brings (v. 7b); thirdly, the reward (v. 7c).

297. – This earth is the human heart: ‘But that on good ground are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it and bring forth fruit in patience’ (Lk. 8:15). It is called earth, because just as earth needs rain, so a man needs God’s grace: ‘You have visited the earth and have plentifully watered it’

(Ps. 64:10). ‘And as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and return no more thither, but soak the earth and water it, and make it to spring, and give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be which shall go forth from my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it’ (Is. 55:10).

But the benefit it receives and the doctrine of faith is as rain which falls on the hearts of those who hear the words of preachers and teachers: ‘I will command the clouds to rain no more upon it’ (Is. 5:6); ‘He pours out showers like a flood, which flow from the clouds that cover all above’ (Jb. 36:27). He drinks this rain, when he understands what he hears and is drawn to it: ‘All you that thirst, come to the waters, and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat’ (Is. 55:1). This doctrine is above it, because some doctrine is from the earth and inclines a person to cling to earthly things; another is from heaven, namely, which teaches heavenly things: ‘For this is not wisdom descending from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish’ (Jas. 3:15); and then he continues: ‘But the wisdom that is from above, first, indeed, is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to persuade, consenting to the good, without dissimulation’ (Jas. 3:17). Or above it, i.e., above the faculty of human reason: for the other sciences were founded according to human reason, but this is divinely inspired: ‘For many things are shown to you above the understanding of men’ (Sir. 3:25). But he does not say, ‘always’ or ‘rarely’, but **often**, because as Augustine says: ‘If always, then it becomes worthless; if rarely, then it is not enough and is neglected’; ‘I have often heard such things as these’ (Jb. 16:2).

298. – The fruit is that it brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated. These are good works, which a man performs by the doctrine received: ‘Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed’ (Gen. 1:11). This earth is cultivated, first of all, by God: ‘My Father is the husbandman’ (Jn. 15:1); it is also cultivated by the prelate: ‘I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase’ (1 Cor. 3:6). It is also cultivated by the man himself: ‘Diligently till your ground’ (Pr. 24:27). It is suitable for God unto glory: ‘Do all for the glory of God’ (1 Cor. 10:31); for the one who acts, it is suitable unto eternal life: ‘You have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting’ (Rom. 6:22).

299. – Then, when he says, **he receives a blessing from God**, he mentions the reward, namely, a divine blessing. But that blessing is no less than the production of goodness in us: in the present life it is imperfect, but in the future life it will be perfect: ‘Unto this you are called, to inherit a blessing’ (1 Pt. 3:9).

300. – Then when he says, **but that which brings forth thorns and briars is reprobate**, he deals with bad earth and does two things: first, he mentions the evil fruit; secondly, the punishment (v. 8b). The fruit, therefore, are the thorns, i.e., minor sins, and the briars, i.e., graver sins, which prick one’s own conscience and sometimes another’s, namely, sins against one’s neighbor: ‘Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you’ (Gen. 3:18).

In regard to the punishment he mentions three things: first, divine reprobation; secondly, the judge's condemnation (v. 8c), thirdly, the final punishment (v. 8d). In regard to the first he says, **is reprobate**. For just as predestination is the source of reward, so reprobation is the sign of condemnation. Therefore, the fact that a person is frequently watered with salutary precepts is a sign of reprobation, if he continues to sin' 'Call them reprobate silver, for the Lord has rejected them' (Jer. 6:30). The condemnation is that he is very near unto a curse: 'Depart, you accursed, into everlasting fire' (Mt. 25:41). The punishment is that his end is to be burnt: 'Every garment mingled with blood shall be burnt, and be fuel for the fire' (Is. 9:5).

6-3

Heb 6:9-12

⁹Though we speak thus, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

301. – Because the Apostle had said many seemingly harsh things about their state, now to keep them from despair, he shows the intention he had in saying these things, namely, to snatch them from danger. Hence, he does two things: first, he shows the confidence he had in them; secondly, the reason for this confidence (v. 10).

302. – He says, therefore: I have stated that the earth which brought forth thorns and briars is reprobate, but lest you suppose that I consider you such, **we feel sure of better things for you and nearer to salvation** because of your faith and charity. Thus, he commends their state on two points, namely, on what they had been, because the fact that he says, **better things**, he supposes that they were in a good state; secondly, on what they awaited in the future, namely, **things nearer to salvation**: ‘Now our salvation is nearer than when we believed’ (Rom. 13:11). For the more one makes progress in the good, the nearer he gets to salvation. Then he continues, **though we speak thus**, i.e., even though we speak this way, it is in order to make you cautious: and this proceeds from charity: ‘The just man shall correct in mercy, and shall reprove me (Ps. 140:5).

303. – Then (v. 10) he gives the reasons for the confidence: one is based on their past good works; the other on God’s promise (v. 13). But because the Apostle had said two things, namely, that he had confidence in them and that he spoke harshly to them, he does two things: first, he gives reason for the first; secondly, the reason for the second (v. 11).

304. – The reason he has confidence in them is that he remembers the many good works they did; hence he says, **In your case we feel sure of better things**. And why? Because God is not so unjust as to overlook your works.

But on the other hand it says in Ez. (18:24): ‘If the just man turn himself away from his justice and do iniquity according to all the abominations which the wicked man does, shall he live?’ And a bit later he continues: ‘All his justices, which he has done, shall not be remembered’, and then: ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’ I answer that a man who falls after grace can react in two ways: he might persist in

evil, and then God forgets all his justices; or he might repent, and then He remembers his previous good works, because they are accounted as merit. Hence, a Gloss says that after dying, they revive.

305. – But another doubt arises, because it is obvious that justice regards merit. Therefore, if God's justice requires that He not forget, if he repents, as the Gloss says, then his rising from sin falls under merit, so that he merits grace: which is impossible. I answer that there are two kinds of merit: one rests on justice and is called condign; the other rests entirely on mercy and is called congruous. It is of the latter that he says that it is just, i.e., congruous, i.e., that a man who performed many good deeds should merit. For that mercy is somehow annexed to justice more than in the case of one who never did anything. It is in this sense that God does not forget our work and our love; for eternal life is due to charity alone: 'If anyone loves, me, he will keep my word' (Jn. 14:23). For whatever does not proceed from charity is not meritorious: 'If I have not charity, it profits me nothing' (1 Cor. 13:3). Hence, he does not say merely, **of your work**, but adds, **and your love**, because, as Gregory says: 'The love of God is not idle, for it performs great things, if it is present: if one refuses to act, there is no love'; 'Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 Jn. 3:18). Therefore, he continues, **which you have showed for his sake**: 'All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ' (Col. 3:17).

306. – What they have showed and in what, he shows when he says, 'in serving the saints', namely, by relieving their needs: 'Whoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister' (Mt. 20:26). 'Communicating to the necessities of the saints' (Rom. 12:13). And because perseverance is necessary in all things, he continues, **as you still do**. Therefore, if you have sinned, He will grant pardon out of mercy annexed to justice.

307. – Then (v. 11) he assigns the reason why he spoke so sharply to them, namely, from a desire for their salvation. Hence, in regard to this he does three things: first, he shows his desire; secondly, he mentions the imminent danger (v. 12); thirdly, he explains by an example (v. 12b).

308. – He says, therefore, We have said these things not as though we despaired of you, but rather because **we desire that everyone**, i.e., each one of you: 'God is my witness, how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 1:8). But what do we desire? **that you show the same carefulness**, i.e., that you be careful to show by your works this carefulness for doing good that you have always had. Hence, it is clear that carefulness is required for doing acts of godliness: 'Martha, Martha, you are careful' (Lk. 10:41) and for one's own salvation: 'Carefully study to present yourself approved unto God' (2 Tim. 2:15). Any why? **To realize the full assurance of hope**, namely, that by fulfilling what you have begun, you may obtain what you hope: 'Hope confounds not' (Rom. 5:5). And this, **until the end**: 'For he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved' (Mt. 24:13).

309. – Then when he says, **so that you may not be sluggish**, he indicates the danger, which is laziness. For laziness is the fear of a future good action, because one fears that he may fail or not repent: ‘The slothful man says: There is a lion in the way’ (Pr. 26:13). Hence, slothful persons always allege obstacles as an excuse.

310. – Then (12b) he gives the example. As if to say: Be not slothful, but rather imitate the example of the prophets: ‘For an example of suffering evil, of labor and of patience, take the prophets’ (Jas. 5:10); and of other saints, namely the apostles: ‘Be you followers of me, as I also am of Christ’ (1 Cor. 4:16). Be you, therefore, **imitators of those who through faith**, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6) **and patience** against adversity, **inherit the promises**. For by formed faith and patience the promised inheritance is obtained: ‘The saints by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises’ (Heb. 11:33).

Heb 6:13-20

¹³For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. ¹⁶Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

311. – Above, the Apostle showed why he had confidence in them, namely, because of the good they performed; here he shows the same because of the promise made to the Patriarchs. Hence, he does two things: first, he mentions the promise; secondly, he assigns the reason for what he says (v. 16). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows to whom the promise was made; secondly, he shows that the way the promise was given was suitable (v. 13b) thirdly, the effect of the promise (v. 15).

312. – **When God made a promise to Abraham:** ‘To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed’ (Gal. 3:16). The reason for this is that by faith we adhere to God; consequently, by faith we obtain the promise. For the first example of faith was found in Abraham, and this because he was the first to withdraw from associating with unbelievers: ‘Go forth out of your country, and from your kindred, and out of your father’s house’ (Gen. 12:1); secondly, because he was the first to believe something above nature: ‘Who against hope believed in hope’ (Rom. 4:18). Hence, Gen. (15:6): ‘Abraham believed God and it was reputed to him unto justice.’ For he was the first to receive the seal of faith, namely, circumcision (Rom. 4:11).

313. – The manner in which the promise was suitable for two reasons: first, because of the oath; secondly, by reason of the words of the promise (v. 14).

314. – He says, therefore: God, wishing to show that His promise is firm and stable, **since he had no one greater by whom to swear:** ‘The Lord is high above all nations’ (Ps. 112:4), **swore by himself:** ‘By my own self have I sworn, says that Lord’ (Gen. 22:16). In this you have an example that an oath is not of itself unlawful, because the Scripture does not attribute to God anything which of itself is a sin. For Scripture intends to direct and lead us to God: ‘Be you followers of God, as most dear children’ (Eph.

5:1). Nevertheless, frequent swearing is forbidden: ‘Let not your mouth be accustomed to swearing’ (Sir. 23:9), and so are oaths taken in vain: ‘You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain’ (Ex. 20:7).

315. – Then (v. 14) he shows the manner in which the promise was made. As if to say: Do not believe me, unless **I bless you**. A blessing refers to bestowing benefits: ‘The blessing of the Lord makes men rich’ (Pr. 10:22); **I will multiply you**, which pertains to numerous offspring. Both promises were made to Abraham, as is clear from Gen. (14 & 15). But he repeats the words, **blessing, I will bless**, in order to designate both temporal and spiritual goods, and the continuance of his blessing. Or, ‘blessing I will bless’ in the multitude of holy offspring, which is designated by the stars of heaven: ‘Look up to heaven and number the stars if you can. And he said unto him: So shall your seed be’ (Gen. 15:5). And **multiplying, I will multiply** in the number of evil and perverse children, which are designated by the sands of the seashore. Or I will bless you in the good things of grace and multiply you in the good things of glory: ‘How great is the multitude of your sweetness, O Lord’ (Ps. 30:20).

316. – The effect of the promise was that Abraham, ‘**having patiently endured, obtained the promise**. For patient endurance consists not only in doing something great, but also in waiting a long time. But Abraham had the promise, although he never possessed the pace of a foot of land, as it says in Ac (7:5); furthermore, even until his old age he possessed no offspring. But he still kept his hope: ‘Take, my brethren, for an example of suffering evil, of labor and patience, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord’ (Jas. 5:10); ‘Look unto Abraham your father and to Sarah that bore you’ (Is. 51:2).

317. – Then when he says, **Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves**, he states the reason for the foregoing. In regard to this he does three things: first, he mentions a human custom; secondly, the reason behind the custom; thirdly, the fruit of the promise (v. 18).

318. – Two human customs are mentioned: one in regard to that by which one swears; the other in regard to the effect of an oath: **in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation**. Now that by which one swears is greater, and reasonably so. For swearing is nothing more than settling a doubt. Therefore, just as in the sciences nothing is settled except by something more certain, so, because nothing is more certain with men than God, one swears by Him, as by something greater and more certain.

319. – But sometimes one swears by the Son, Who is less; as when one says, ‘by Christ’ or by the creature, as Joseph swore by the health of Pharaoh (Gen. 42:16). I answer that there are two ways of swearing by God: one is by a simple attestation, as when one says, ‘By God, it is so.’ As if to say: God is my witness that it is as I say: ‘For God is my witness, who I serve in spirit’ (Rom. 1:9). Another way is by execration, which occurs when something, such as the head of the soul or something of that sort, is offered unto God for vengeance, if it is not so. This is the way the Apostle swore in 2 Cor (1:23): ‘But I

call God to witness upon my soul.’ As if to say: I offer my soul as witness, for which I take God’s name. And this is very solemn. But one swears by a creature not as such, but inasmuch as some sign of God’s power is resplendent in it. For since all power is from God (Rom. 13:1), then, inasmuch as someone exercises power over a group, if he swears by it, he swears by God, Whose power is reflected in it. This is the way Joseph swore by the health of Pharaoh. This, therefore, is what he says, **Men swear by one greater than themselves.**

320. – But it should be noted that those who are otherwise known as perjurers must be kept from taking oaths, because the greatest reverence should be shown an oath, and from their past actions it is presumed that they will not show an oath proper reverence. Likewise, children should not be compelled to take an oath before the years of puberty, because they do not yet have perfect use of reason to know what reverence must be paid an oath. Also persons of high stations; because an oath is required of those about whose words or actions there is doubt. But it detracts from persons of high station, when one doubts the truth of what they say. Hence, in the *Decretals* (q. 2, ch. 4) it says that a priest should not take an oath for some slight cause. But the causes in which it is lawful to swear are the following: for strengthening peace, as Laban swore (Gen. 31:48); secondly, for preserving one’s good name; thirdly, for pledging fealty, as vassals swore to their lord; fourthly, for having obedience fulfilled, if something honorable is commanded by a superior; fifthly, for obtaining security; sixthly, for attesting to a truth, which is the way the Apostle swore: ‘God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit’ (Rom. 1:9).

321. – Then when he says, **and an oath is final for confirmation**, he mentions the effect of an oath, which is to put an end to all controversy. For just as in the sciences one stops when he has reduced his proof to the first principles, so is the divine law, when one come to the first truth, he stops and this is the time, when the first truth is invoked as a witness: ‘The master of the house shall be brought to the gods and he shall swear’ (Ex. 22:8). Thus all questions and all controversies are settled.

322. – Then when he says, **So when God desired to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his purpose, he interposed an oath**, he states the reason why God willed to swear, namely, to show the immutability of His promise. Hence, he says, **wherein**, i.e., by the fact that He interposed an oath, **desiring more abundantly to show**; for it was abundant that He promised, but more abundant that He swore, desiring, I say, **to show to the heirs of the promise**, i.e., of the thing promised: ‘They that are the children of the promise are accounted for the seed’ (Rom. 9:8), to show, I say, **the immutability of his purpose.**

It should be noted in regard to things which proceed from God that two things must be considered, namely, the coming-forth of things and God’s counsel by which such a coming-forth is caused. God’s counsel is absolutely unchangeable: ‘My counsel shall stand and all my will shall be done’ (Is. 46:10). But the disposition is quite changeable, for the Lord sometimes announces something according as the order and coming-forth of things requires, as in Is (38:1) ‘Take order with your house,

for you shall die and not live'; for the cause of his sickness was such that he should die from it. Also in Jonah (3:4): 'Yet forth days and Nineveh shall be destroyed', because it has deserved destruction: 'I will suddenly speak against a nation and a kingdom, to root out, to pull down and to destroy it. If that nation against which I have spoken shall repent of their evil, I also will repent of the evil I have thought to do to them' (Jer. 18:7). In this case the prophecy is a threat. But sometimes something is announced according to God's eternal counsel, and in that case God never repents or retracts it: 'But the triumpher in Israel will not spare, and will not be moved to repentance' (1 Sam. 15:29). Yet it should be noted that whenever God promises something under oath, it is a prophecy of predestination which reveals God's plan. Such a promise is absolutely unchangeable.

323. – Then (v.18) he shows the fruit of the promise: first, he shows that that fruit is; secondly, what follows upon it (v. 19).

324. – The fruit, of course, is that our hope is certain; hence, he says, **that we might have strong**, i.e., firm, **encouragement of hope, by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should be false**, namely, by God who promises and does not lie: 'God is not a man that he should lie' (Num. 23:19) and by the oath in which there is a stronger confirmation of the truth. But it should be noted that just as sensual delight is a sense experience and memory of the past, so hope is of the future: 'None that trust in him shall fail in strength' (1 Mac 2:61); 'They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, and they shall take wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint' (Is. 40:31). We may have, I say, **we who have fled for refuge** from the evils of the world and the onslaught of the enemy, **to seize the hope set before us**: 'Lord, you have been my refuge' (Ps. 89:11); 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the just runs to it and shall be exalted' (Pr. 18:10).

325. – Then when he says, **we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul**, he shows that faith will obtain that promise; and he makes use of a simile. For he compares hope to an anchor, which just as it secures ship in the sea, so hope secures the soul in God in this work, which is, as it were, a kind of sea: 'So is this great sea, which stretches wide its arms' (Ps. 103:25); hence, it is made of iron: 'I know whom I have believed and I am certain' (2 Tim. 1:12). Also it should be firm, so that it is not easily removed from the ship; thus a man should be held fast to that hope as an anchor and hope is that the anchor is fixed to a low place, but hope is fixed in the highest, namely, to God. For nothing in the present life is so firm that the soul could be secure and at rest; hence, it says in Gen. (8:8) that the dove found no place where her foot might rest. And, therefore, he says that this hope should **enter into the inner shrine behind the veil**. For the Apostle understand the present condition of the Church by the holy things that were in the tabernacle; but by the holy of holies, which was separated from the saints by a veil, he understands the state of future glory. Therefore, he wills that the anchor of our hope be fixed in that which is now veiled from our eyes: 'The eye has not seen, O God, besides thee, what things you have prepared for them that wait for you' (Is. 64:4); 'How great is the multitude of your sweetness, O Lord, which you have hidden

for them that fear you!’ (Ps. 30:20). This, our **forerunner**, who has entered there, has fixed there; hence, it says in Jn (14:2): ‘I go to prepare a place for you.’ He shall go up that shall open the way before them’ (Mic. 2:13). Therefore, he says that **Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf within the veil** and has fixed our hope there, as it says in the collect of vigil and of Ascension day. Yet because the high priest alone was permitted to enter within the veil (Lev 16), he says that Jesus has entered **on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek**. Notice how elegantly the Apostle returns to his main theme. For he had begun to speak of the priesthood and then digressed; but now he returns to it, as is obvious.

Heb. 7:1-3

¹For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; ²and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever.

326. – In Chapter 5 the Apostle proved that Christ is a priest, but in Chapter 6 he interposed certain considerations to prepare the minds of his hearers. Now he returns to his main theme: for he intends to prove the excellence of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows the excellence of Christ's priesthood as compared to the priesthood of the Old Testament; secondly, he shows that believers should subject themselves reverently to the priesthood of Christ (c. 10). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the prerogative of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical on the part of the person of the priest; secondly, on the part of the minister (c. 8). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he proves the existence of Christ's priesthood by reason of a divine promise; secondly, the need for this priesthood (v. 26).

But he shows this promise from the words of Ps. 109 (v. 4): 'The Lord has sworn and he will not repent: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' Hence, he shows three things to prove his thesis: first, the phrase, 'according to the order of Melchizedek'; secondly, the statement 'He swore' (v. 20); thirdly, the statement, 'You are a priest forever' (v. 23). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the likeness of Christ to Melchizedek; secondly, on the basis of this likeness he chooses the priesthood of Christ over the Levitical (v. 4). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he describes Melchizedek's qualities; secondly, he shows how they fit Christ (v. 2b).

327. – He describes Melchizedek, first of all, by his name when he says, **For this Melchizedek**. For so the Scripture names him in Genesis (14:18), where his history, which the Apostle supposes here, is recorded. According to a Gloss the Hebrews say that was Shem, the first-born of Noah, and when Abraham obtained the victory, he was 390 or 309 years old, and met Abraham, his nephew.

328. – Secondly, he describes him from his dignity, for he was king and a priest. In regard to the first he says, **king of Salem**. Some say that Salem is called Jerusalem. But Jerome denies this in a letter, because, as he says, he could not run into him from Jerusalem, which he proves from its location. Others say that Salem is the place where John baptized (Jn. 3:23), and the walls of that place still existed in Jerome's time. In regard to the second he says, **priest of the Most High God**. For in olden times the elder brother was a priest. But it is true that in Abraham's time the worship of idols was on the increase. Therefore, lest

anyone suppose that he was a priest of idols, he adds, **of the Most High God**, namely, God by essence not by participation or name. For God is the Creator of all who are gods either by participation or erroneously: ‘The Lord is a great king above all gods’ (Ps. 94:3); ‘You shall be called priests of the Lord: to you it shall be said: You ministers of our God’ (Is. 61:6).

329. – Thirdly, he describes him from his office: **who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him**. For a priest is midway between God and the people. Therefore, he should confer something on the people, namely, spiritual things, and receive something from them, namely, temporal things: ‘If we then have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter, if we reap your carnal things?’ (1 Cor. 9:11). First, therefore, he should show strength by good advice; hence it says in Genesis (14) that the four kings are the four principal vices opposed to the four cardinal virtues which hold the emotions, the nephew of reason, captive after the five bodily senses are overcome. For a person who overcomes and frees the emotions deserves to be comforted by a priest: ‘Meeting the thirsty, bring him water’ (Is. 21:14); ‘Strengthen the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees’ (Is. 35:3). Secondly, a priest should give strength by administering the sacraments with a blessing; hence, **he blessed him**: ‘We have blessed you in the name of the Lord’ (Ps. 117:26). But this is done by conferring the sacraments, by which a man is strengthened in grace: ‘They shall invoke my name upon the children of Israel and I will bless them’ (Num. 6:27), for God blesses by His authority, but the priest by his ministry. **To him Abraham apportioned**, i.e., distributed properly, **a tenth part of everything** [tithes] for his sustenance.

330. – But it seems from Numbers (18:21) that the giving of tithes dated from the Law; therefore, there was none before the Law. I answer that the ceremonial precepts of the Old Testament are amplifications of the precepts of the natural law and of the moral precepts; therefore, in regard to what they had from the natural law, they were observed before the Law without any precept. For the fact that something is offered to God in recognition of His creation and dominion is natural; but that He should be offered goats and heifers is a ceremonial precept. Similarly, it is according to natural law that ministers serving God be sustained by the people, for it is clear from Genesis (47:22) that this was observed among the Gentiles. Hence, priests, because they were fed from the public storehouses, were not compelled to sell their possessions. Therefore, there were tithes before the Law, but the determination of this amount was fixed by the law: ‘All tithes are the Lord’s’ (Lev. 27:30). A sign of this was the fact that Jacob before the Law vowed that he would give tithes in the place where the temple was later built. And this was done particularly because the main reason for rendering worship to God is to signify that whatever a man has, he received from God and that he depends on Him for his entire perfection. For the number ‘ten’ is perfect, since it is the sum of its several parts, because the sum of one plus two plus three plus four is ten. Furthermore, one counts as far as ten and all other numbers are repetitions or additions to ten. Therefore,

all numbers are imperfect until ten is reached. Likewise, all perfection is from God. Therefore, in order to signify that the fulfillment of all perfection is from God, he gave tithes.

331. – Then (v. 2b) he shows the likeness to Melchizedek. In regard to this he does two things: first, he suggests the likeness in regard to the condition of the person; secondly, in regard to the priesthood (v. 3b). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states a likeness in regard to things commemorated in Scripture; secondly, in regard to things not mentioned in Scripture (v. 3).

332. – In Scripture two things are said of him: first, his name, namely, Melchizedek, **who is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness**, and signifies Christ, Who was a king: ‘And a king shall reign, and shall be wise: and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth’ (Jer. 23:5). He is not only called righteous, but king of righteousness, because He was made wisdom and righteousness for us (1 Cor. 1:30). Another thing said of him is his status; hence, **he is called king of Salem, that is, king of peace**. But this suits Christ: ‘For he is our peace’ (Eph. 2:14); ‘In his days shall justice spring up and abundance of peace’ (Ps. 71:7). And in this the Apostle teaches us to use the interpretation of names in preaching. He does well to join justice and peace, because no one can make peace who does not observe justice: ‘The work of justice shall be peace’ (Is. 32:17). In this world they are governed in justice, but in the world to come in peace: ‘My people shall sit in the beauty of peace’ (Is. 32:18).

333. – Then when he says, **without father or mother or genealogy**, he presents a likeness in regard to the things not mentioned about him, because in Scripture no mention is made of his father or mother or genealogy. Hence, some of the ancients made this matter of their error, saying that since God alone is without beginning and without end, Melchizedek was the Son of God. But this has been condemned as heretical. Hence, it should be noted that the Old Testament, whenever mention is made of some important person, his father is named along with the time of his birth and death, as in the case of Isaac and many others. But here Melchizedek is suddenly introduced with no mention at all made of his birth or anything pertaining to it. This was not done without reason. For inasmuch as it is said, **without father**, the birth of Christ from the Virgin is signified, for it occurred without a father: ‘That which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit’ (Mt. 1:20). Now that which is proper to God should not be attributed to a creature; but it is proper to God the Father to be the Father of Christ. Therefore, in the birth of the one who prefigured Him, no mention should be made of a carnal father. Also in regard to His eternal birth he says, **without mother**, lest anyone suppose that birth to be material, as the mother gives the matter to her begotten; but it is spiritual, as brightness from the sun: ‘Who being the brightness of his glory and figure of his substance’ (Heb. 1:3). Also, when generation proceeds from a father and a mother, it is not all from the father, but the matter is ministered by the mother. Therefore, to exclude all imperfection from Christ and to designate that all he has from the Father, no mention is made of a mother; hence, the verse: ‘He is God without a mother; He is flesh without a father.’ ‘From the womb before the day star I begot you,’ i.e., I alone (Ps. 109:3).

Without genealogy: now there are two reasons why his genealogy is not given in the Scripture: one is because the generation of Christ is ineffable: ‘Who shall declare his generation’ (Is. 53:8); the other is because Christ, Who is introduced as a priest, does not pertain to the Levitical priesthood, nor to a genealogy of the Old Law. This is the Apostle’s intention; hence, he says, **and has neither beginning of days nor end of life**. But he says this, not because Christ was not born in time or did not die, but because of His eternal generation, in which He was born without the beginning of any time: ‘In the beginning was the Word’ (Jn. 1:1), i.e., no matter what time you mention, the Word was before it, as Basil explains. Also, **no end of life**: this is true in regard to His divinity, which is eternal. But in regard to His humanity, He no longer has an end of life, because ‘Christ rising again from the dead, dies now no more’ (Rom. 6:9); and below (13:8): ‘Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today; and the same forever.’

334. – Then when he says, **but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever**, he indicates a likeness in regard to the priesthood. Yet it should be noted that later things are said to be similar to earlier things, and vice versa. Consequently, lest anyone suppose that Christ’s priesthood is later than that of Melchizedek, the Apostle dispels this, because, although Christ as man was born after him and existed in time, nevertheless, as God and as the Son of God, He exists from eternity. Therefore, Melchizedek was like Christ, the Son of God, in regard to all those features: and this inasmuch as He continues a priest forever, which can be explained in two ways: one way, because no mention is made of the end of his priesthood or of his successor: ‘I have used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets’ (Hos 12:10). He also says, **a priest forever**, because that which is prefigured, namely, Christ’s priesthood, lasts forever. Hence, even in Scripture it is frequently referred to as perpetual: ‘It shall be a perpetual observance’ (Ex. 27:21): ‘By a perpetual service and rite’ (Lev. 24:3), because that which was symbolized by it is perpetual.

In this matter the Apostle connects the following with the preceding.

Heb. 7:4-10

⁴See how great he is! Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of the spoils. ⁵And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brethren, though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶But this man who has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. ⁸Here tithes are received by mortal men; there, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. ⁹One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

335. – Having showed how Melchizedek was likened to the Son of God, the Apostle now shows the pre-eminence of Melchizedek's priesthood over the Levitical. In regard to this he does two things: first, he attracts their attention; secondly, he states his thesis (v. 5).

336. – He attracts them by saying that he is about to speak of great and important matters: 'Hear, for I will speak of great things' (Pr. 8:5); hence, he says, **see how great**, i.e., of what great dignity, **he is, to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tithe of the spoils**: 'Cursed is the deceitful man, that has in his flock a male, and making a vow, offers in sacrifice that which is feeble, to the Lord' (Mal. 1:14). Abraham is called a patriarch, i.e., the chief of fathers, not because he had no father, but because the promise of being father of the Gentiles was made to him: 'You shall be a father of many nations' (Gen. 17:4); 'Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations' (Sir. 44:20); 'I have made you a father of many nations before God whom he believed' (Rom. 4:17).

337. – Then (v. 5) he shows the pre-eminence of Melchizedek's priesthood over that of the Levitical. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states his proposition; secondly, from this he concludes his thesis, namely, that Christ's priesthood is preferred to the Levitical (v. 11). The first is divided into two parts: in the first he states his proposition; in the second he rejects a certain response (v. 9). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the pre-eminence in regard to that in which he used his priesthood; secondly, in regard to the state of the priesthood (v. 8). But two things pertain to the priest, namely, to receive and to bless. Therefore, he does two things: first, he shows its excellence as far as receiving tithes is concerned; secondly, in regard to blessing (v. 6b). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows who is competent to accept tithes; secondly, how Melchizedek did this in a more excellent manner (v. 8).

338. – He says, therefore: **And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people.** In this he shows that it belongs to priests to take tithes. But it should be noted that the members of Levi's tribe were deputed to divine worship, but among them only the descendants of Aaron were priests: 'Take unto you also Aaron, your brother, with his sons from among the children of Israel, that they may minister to me in the priest's office' (Ex. 28:1). Hence, those who belong to the tribe of Levi through Aaron took tithes.

This would seem to indicate that the priests alone took tithes, which is contrary to what it says in Numbers (18:21): 'I have given to the sons of Levi all the tithes of Israel.' I answer that the Levites received them, only because they ministered to the priests; consequently, they were given not for themselves but for the priests. Furthermore, the Levites received only one-tenth of the tithes, as it says in Numbers (18:26); therefore, only the priests received and did not pay.

339. – Secondly, he shows by what right they received them, namely, by a commandment of the Law; hence, he says, **they have commandment in the law to take tithes.** But if this is a commandment of the Law, then, since the observance of a commandment of the Law is now a sin, it seems unlawful to give or to receive tithes now. I answer that there were in the Law some precepts that were purely ceremonial, as circumcision, the immolation of the lamb, and so on. Such laws, since they were only figurative, it is no longer licit to observe, for they were a figure of something to come; hence, anyone who observes them now would be signifying that Christ is still to come. But others were purely moral, and these must be observed now. Among these was the giving of tithes, as was explained above. Hence, tithing was in vogue during the Law and under the New Testament: 'The worker is worthy of his food' (Mt. 10:10); 'The worker is worthy of his hire' (Lk. 10:7). But the determination of such a portion now is made by the Church, just as in the Old Testament it was determined by the Law. But others were partly ceremonial and partly moral, as the judicial precepts. These laws are no longer to be used in regard to what is ceremonial; but in regard to what is moral, they must be obeyed. Yet it is not necessary that they be observed in their proper form.

Another objection: If it were a commandment still in vogue, then one who does not take tithes sins, and they sin where they are not taken. I answer that some say that no one may lawfully renounce his right to take tithes, but it is lawful to renounce the practice of taking them because of scandal; and this from the example of the Apostle who took no sustenance from anyone. So they say that the are commanded not to renounce the right. But it is better to say that they are not commanded to take; but they have this command introduced for themselves, so that they can take, and the others are bound to give.

340. – Thirdly, he shows from who they received, namely, **from the people**, i.e., from their brethren, though these also are descended from the loins of Abraham. For since someone might say that just as Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, so, too, his sons, the Levites; therefore, that priesthood is not preferred to this one. Consequently, he excludes this and says that the Levites themselves were of the seed of Abraham and, consequently were inferior to Abraham, who paid the tithes.

341. – Then when he says, **But this man who has not the genealogy received tithes of Abraham**, he shows how it was more fitting for Melchizedek to receive tithes, because he was not of the stock of Abraham; hence, he has not their genealogy, namely, of the Levites. Furthermore, according to a commandment of the Law it was lawful for him to take tithes; consequently, their priesthood was subject to the observance of the Law. But he took tithes not by reason of any law but of himself; therefore, his priesthood was a figure of Christ's priesthood, which is not subject to the Law. Likewise, they received from a lowly people, namely, their brethren, but he from the highest, namely, from Abraham.

342. – Then when he says, **and blessed him that had the promises**, he shows his excellence from the viewpoint of the blessing. His reason is this: In Genesis (14:19) it says that Melchizedek blessed Abraham; but one who blesses is greater than the one blessed, therefore, etc. Hence, he says that Melchizedek blessed Abraham, who had the promises.

But on the other hand, it says below (11:39): 'They received not the promise.' I answer that Abraham did not receive the promise, i.e., the things promised, because he did not obtain it; but he possessed it in faith and hope, and to him specifically the promises were made.

343. – Then when he says, **it is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior**, he states the major premise of his reasoning. But here there are three objections: the first concerns the statement that the lesser is blessed by the better. On this score the Poor Men of Lyons claim that any just person is greater than a sinner; consequently, a just layman is not blessed by a wicked priest, but conversely. Hence, they would have it that every just man is a priest and no sinner is a priest. I answer that this error is most pernicious, because if a good minister is required for conferring the sacraments, in which salvation is found, it follows that no one is sure of his salvation or knows whether he was properly baptized, because he cannot know if the priest was just. For no one could be ministers, because 'no one knows whether he is worthy of hatred or love' (Ec 9:1). Therefore, it should be noted that a person can do something in two ways: either by his own authority, or by someone else's. When it is by his own authority, it is required that he be just. But a priest is only a minister; hence, he acts only in virtue of Christ: 'Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God' (1 Cor. 4:1). Therefore, he does no harm whether he be good or bad, because it is Christ Who blesses in him. Hence, without any contradiction, the one who is greater, blesses.

The second objection is that since Christ is greater than any priest, how can the body of Christ be consecrated by a priest? I answer that the priest blesses the matter and not the body of Christ. Furthermore, he does not act by his own authority, but by that of Christ, Who as God is greater than His body.

The third objection is that it does not seem true that the greater always blesses the lesser, because the Pope is consecrated by a bishop, and an Archbishop by a suffragan, both of who are lesser. I answer

that a bishop does not consecrate the Pope nor the suffragan the Archbishop, but they consecrate this man to be Pope or Archbishop. Furthermore, they do this as the ministers of God, Who is greater than the Pope.

344. – Then when he says, **Here tithes are received by mortal men**, he shows the pre-eminence of the priesthood on the part of the priest by reason of his state. His reasoning is this: That the more excellent which is not corrupted. But in the Levitical priesthood mortal men, i.e., who succeed by death, receive tithes; but there, in the priesthood of Melchizedek, **by one of who it is testified from the Scripture, that he lives**, i.e., it makes no mention of his death, not because he did not die, but because he signifies a priesthood that continues forever: ‘Christ, rising again from the dead, dies now no more’ (Rom. 6:9); ‘I was dead, and behold I am living forever and ever’ (Rev. 1:18).

345. – Then when he says, **and one might say that even Levi who received tithes, paid tithes through Abraham**, he answers an objection. For someone might say: it is true that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham who gave him tithes; but Levi is greater than Melchizedek. So the Apostle says that this is not valid, because one might say that through Abraham, i.e., through the medium of Abraham, even Levi paid tithes to him who received them, i.e., to Melchizedek. Therefore, he is still greater than Levi.

But on the other hand, if the father of a bishop gives tithes, that is no reason why the bishop is less than the one who receives the tithes. Therefore, neither in the case at hand. I answer that the cases are not the same, because the entire dignity of the Jewish race and of its priests stemmed from Abraham; but in the case of a bishop, his entire dignity derives from Christ, not from his father.

346. – Then (v. 10) he explains what he had said; and he says that Levi **was still in the loins of his father**, Abraham, when he gave tithes to Melchizedek, who met him. Consequently, when Abraham was tithed, Levi was tithed.

But on the other hand: Christ, too, was in his loins, just as Levi: ‘The son of David, the son of Abraham’ (Mt. 1:1). Therefore, if the reason why Melchizedek is greater than Levi is that Levi was tithed, there seems to be no reason why Christ was not tithed; consequently, Melchizedek is still greater than Christ. And the same difficulty applies to original sin, because as it says in Romans (5:12): ‘In whom all have sinned,’ i.e., in Adam. Therefore, it seems that Christ, Who existed in him in the same way as we, should have contracted original sin. I answer that all this is understood in regard to those who were in Abraham or in Adam according to seminal reasons or bodily substance. For Christ was conceived in regard to His body from the most pure and holy matter of the Blessed Virgin, as it says in 3 Sent. d. 5.

Heb. 7:11-19

¹¹Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? ¹²For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. ¹³For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. ¹⁵This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.” ¹⁸On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

347. – Having proved the pre-eminence of Melchizedek’s priesthood over the Levitical, the Apostle now concludes to the excellence of Christ’s priesthood over that of the Levitical. But as has been stated above from the beginning of ch. 7, the Apostle proves his proposition from three statements taken from the Psalmist: first, from the phrase, ‘according to the order of Melchizedek.’ Therefore, he proved the pre-eminence of Melchizedek over Levi. Now according to the order of Melchizedek’s priesthood, he proves Christ’s pre-eminence over the Levitical. Hence, he lays great stress on the phrase, ‘according to the order.’ And he gives two reasons: the first concludes that the priesthood of Christ is preferred to the Levitical; secondly, that it even makes it void (v. 15).

In the first reason, which is conditional, he lays down two antecedents and two consequents: **what further need would there have been for another priesthood to rise according to the order of Melchizedek?**

348. – His reasoning is this: If the Levitical priesthood had been perfect, by whose ministry the Law was administered, there would have been no need for another priest according to another order through which another Law is administered, just as the Old Law was administered by the Levitical. But another priest has risen according to another order, namely, of Melchizedek. Therefore, the other was imperfect. Therefore, just as another priesthood has risen, so it is necessary that another Law arise. In this reasoning it is manifest that there are two antecedents, namely, one pertaining to the priesthood and the other pertaining to the Law. In regard to the first antecedent he says, **if perfection was attainable by the Levitical priesthood**. But in regard to the second he says that if a law is administered by a priesthood, which he proves, because under it, i.e., by its administration, the people received the law; not that the

priesthood preceded the Law, but conversely. Hence, he states the second antecedent when he says, **for under it the people received the law**: ‘The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge; and they shall seek the law at his mouth’ (Mal. 2:7). But he makes mention of the priesthood specifically in order to pass to the Law, which was administered by the priestly office: for as a Gloss says, there can be no priest without a testament and a law and precepts. But the priesthood brought nothing to perfection, for its entire perfection was through the Law, which they administered; but as will be shown later: ‘The law brought no one to perfection,’ because it did not lead to the perfection of justice: ‘Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt. 5:20); likewise, it did not bring the perfection of heaven, because it did not bring one into life. A sign of this was that the lawgiver himself could not enter the promised land. But we have these two perfections through Christ: ‘The consumption abridged shall overflow with justice (Is. 10:22); ‘A short word shall the Lord make upon the earth’ (Rom. 9:28). These, therefore, are the antecedents.

349. – But he lays down the consequents when he says, **what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron**, i.e., he would not have said, according to the order of Melchizedek, but ‘according to the order of Aaron.’ Therefore, because He did not, it was imperfect. This is the entire first reason, through which it is clear that Christ’s priesthood is preferred to the Levitical.

The second reason proves that He even voided it, because the perfect voids the imperfect: ‘When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away’ (1 Cor. 13:10). Therefore, the priesthood of Christ does away with the Levitical.

350. – The second consequent is that it also does away with the Law which was administered by it. He states this when he says, **When there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well**. For the Law was under the administration of the priesthood; therefore, the priesthood being translated, it is necessary that the Law be changed; just as a person who changes his mind about traveling by water, changes his mind about finding a ship. But every Law is ordained to leading one’s life according to some rule. Hence, according to the Philosopher in the *Politics*, when the mode of life is changed, it is necessary for the law to be changed. But just as human law is ordained to human guidance, so a spiritual and divine law to divine guidance. But this guidance is regulated by a priesthood. Therefore, the priesthood being translated, it is necessary that a translation be made of the Law.

351. – But he speaks carefully, because he does not say, ‘The priest being translated’: for the law does not regard the person of the priest. Hence, when the priest dies, the law is not changed, unless perchance the entire method and order of guidance is changed. Jeremiah speaks of change when he says: ‘Behold, the days shall come, says the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant I made with your fathers’ (Jer. 31:31); ‘For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has delivered me from the law of sin and of death’ (Rom. 8:2). For the Old

Law is called the Law of sin and of death, because it did not confer grace *ex opere operato*, as the sacraments of the New Law do.

352. – But the Manicheans raise an objection here: If the Old Law was given by divine providence, which is immutable, the Law itself should be immutable; consequently, it should not be changed. Therefore, since it was changed, it was not given by divine providence. I answer, as Augustine says *Against Faustus*, that just as a wide dispenser by one and the same arrangement and providence gives different laws according as times and persons differ, one law for summer and another for winter, one for children and one for adults, one for perfect and another for imperfect, and yet is the same providence; so with divine providence remaining unchanged, the Law was changed to fit the times: because before the coming of Christ precepts were given to prefigure His coming, but after His coming, precepts were given to signify that He had come. Furthermore, the precepts were given to them as to children, but in the New Law as to the perfect. Hence, the Law is called a pedagogue, which is strictly for children. Therefore, if something given in the Law suggests perpetuity, this is by reason of the One prefigured.

353. – Likewise, a Gloss here states that this translation of the priesthood was prefigured in 1 Sam (2:28), when the priesthood was transferred to Samuel, who was not of the tribe of Levi. But because Samuel was not a priest, this transfer seems rather to have prefigured by the transfer of the priesthood from Abiathar to Zadok, who was also a Levite. I answer that although Samuel was not a priest, he performed some priestly functions, because he offered sacrifices and anointed kings, namely, Saul and David. In this respect the priesthood had been transferred to him. Hence, it says in Ps. 98 (v. 6): ‘Moses and Aaron among his priests: and Samuel among them that call upon his name.’

354. – Likewise, contrary to the Gloss is the fact that he was not of the tribe of Levi, because in 1 Chronicles (7:23) Elkanah, who was his father, is himself numbered among the sons of Levi. I answer that Samuel was in some sense from the tribe of Judah, namely, through his mother; but in regard to his father he was of the tribe of Levi, but not through Aaron; in regard to his place he was from Mount Ephraim. For although eleven tribes had their own provinces, the tribe of Levi did not, but he took possession among them, and so he dwelt in Mount Ephraim.

355. – Then when he says, he of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, he clarifies what he had said: first, that the priesthood was transferred; secondly, he explains this (v. 14).

356. – He says, therefore: It has been stated that the priesthood was transferred, because the one to whom the prophet said, ‘You are a priest forever,’ is of another tribe, namely, of Judah and not of Levi, as is clear from Matthew (1:3), from which tribe, namely, Judah, no one has served the altar.

But on the other hand, King Uzziah entered the temple to burn incense, as it says in 2 Chronicles (26:16). I answer that no one could lawfully attend on the altar or even do so with impunity. For Uzziah was grievously punished, because he was a leper, until he died.

If you say that it is wrong to say ‘no one,’ because the Blessed Virgin was of the tribe and family of Aaron, for she was related to Elizabeth, who was one of the daughters of Aaron (Lk. 1:5), I answer that among the families the most illustrious were the priestly and royal families. Hence, they were frequently joined in marriage, as is clear in the case of the first high priest, who took to wife the daughter of Aminadab, the sister of Nahshon, who was the leader of the tribe of Judah (Ex. 6:23). Furthermore, in 2 Kg (11) Jehoiada, a priest, took to wife Jehosheba, daughter of King Joram. Hence, it is possible that on one side, Elizabeth was of the tribe of Judah.

357. – Then he explains what he had said, saying, It is evident that our Lord descended from Judah: ‘The lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered’ (Rev. 5:5). In connection with that tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. For the Law commanded that no one be entrusted with the ministry of the tabernacle, except from the tribe of Levi only; hence, in the tribe of Judah, Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

358. – Then when he says, **This becomes even more evident**, because above he had presented one reason to prove that Christ’s priesthood is preferred over the Levitical and does away with it; he now presents the other reason, in which he shows why it is done away with and changed. To do this he makes use of a conditional, in the first of which he lays down two antecedents, and in the second two consequents. In regard to the first he does two things: first, he lays down those antecedents; secondly, he clarifies what he has said (v. 17).

359. – His reasoning is this: If a new priest arises, this will not be according to the Law of a carnal commandment, but according to the Law of eternal and incorruptible life; the reason being that the first was according to that Law. It is proper, therefore, to say that the new one be according to another law, if a new one does actually arise. But a new one does arise. In the major premise are two statements: one pertains to the Old Testament, namely, that it is a carnal commandment, and this because it had certain carnal observances, as circumcision and purifications of the flesh, and because it promised carnal rewards and punishments: ‘If you be willing and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land’ (Is. 1:19) ‘Justices of the flesh laid on them until the time of correction’ (Heb. 9:10). He lays down that antecedent when he says, **and this becomes even more evident, if according to the likeness of Melchizedek there arises another priest**. It is clear that it pertains to the New Testament, which is not dispensed by carnal things, but consists of spiritual things: for it is founded upon a spiritual power, by which a perpetual life is produced in us; and this because perpetual goods and punishments are promised in it: ‘But Christ, being come a high priest of the good things to come’ (Heb. 9:11); ‘And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting’ (Mt. 25:26). Furthermore, it does not consist

in carnal observances but in spiritual: 'The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life' (Jn. 6:64). And this is what he says, namely, that it is **according to the power of an indestructible life**.

360. – Then when he says, **For he testifies: 'You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek'**, he manifests what he had said; and he emphasizes the phrase **forever**, because if the priesthood is eternal, it is clear that it involves perpetuity.

361. – Then when he says, **On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside**, he lays down two consequents: first, in regard to the voiding of the Old Testament; secondly, the institution of the New.

362. – The first consequent is that the Old Testament came about by the law of carnal commandments, and the other is then introduced. The first, therefore, is changed: and this is what he says, namely, there is a setting aside of the former commandment.

But nothing is set aside except what is evil: 'That he may know how to refuse the evil' (Is. 7:15). But the commandment is not evil 'The law indeed is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good' (Rom. 7:12). I answer that it was not evil in itself, but inasmuch as it was unsuited to the time. For the things of the Old Testament are not to be kept in the New Testament: 'Sacrifice and oblation you did not desire: then said I: behold, I come' (Ps. 39:8). Therefore, it is said to be set aside because of its weakness and uselessness. For that is said to be weak which cannot produce its effect; but the proper effect of the Law and of the priesthood is to justify. This the Law was unable to do: 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh; God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin has condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom. 8:3); 'How turn you again to the weak and needy elements, which you desire to serve again?' (Gal. 4:9). Likewise, it is called useless, inasmuch as it prepared one for the faith: 'All these died according to the flesh, not having received the promises' (Heb. 11:13). But he shows why it is weak and useless when he says, it made nothing perfect in regard to justice or eternal life. Hence, it was imperfect, but it was made perfect by Christ.

363. – Then when he says, **on the other hand a better hope is introduced**, he lays down the second consequent from the second antecedent, saying, **a better hope is introduced by the new priest, through which we draw near to God**. For if a new priest arises, it is according to the power of an indestructible life (this is the antecedent); and the introduction of a better hope (this is the consequent): 'He has regenerated us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ' (1 Pt 1:3). Likewise, through Him we draw near to God, for through sin we are separated from Him: 'But your iniquities have divided you between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he should not hear' (Is. 59:2). He, therefore, is the one who removes this and makes us draw near to God. He is that new Priest, namely, Christ, Who takes away the sins of the world: 'Being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into this grace' (Rom. 5:1).

Heb. 7:20-28

²⁰And it was not without an oath. ²¹Those who formerly became priests took their office without an oath, but this one was addressed with an oath, “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest for ever.’” ²²This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant. ²³The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; ²⁴but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. ²⁵Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

364. – Having proved by the authority of the Psalmist that the priesthood of Christ is preferred to the Levitical and does away with it, the Apostle now proves the same thing by two other authorities: first, from the fact that he says, ‘The Lord has sworn’; secondly, that he says, ‘You are a priest’ (v. 23).

365. – In regard to the first he forms the following argument: ‘That which is instituted without an oath is less valid than that which is instituted with an oath. But the priesthood of Christ was instituted with an oath, as is clear from what he says, the Lord has sworn; but not the priesthood of Aaron, as is clear from Exodus (28:1): ‘Take unto you also Aaron’, therefore, etc.

In regard to the major premise he says, **and it was not without an oath**. Those who formerly became priests took their office without an oath, but this one was addressed with an oath. All this is set down to prove that the priesthood of Christ is firmer; because, as has been stated above, every promise made in the Old Testament by an oath is a sign of God’s unchangeable plan. Therefore, because that promise about Christ was made with an oath of David and to Abraham, Christ is called their son in a special way (Mt. 1:1). But that oath designates the eternity of Christ’s power: ‘His power is an everlasting power’ Dan (7:14); ‘And of his kingdom there will be no end’ (Lk. 1:33).

366. – This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant, because His priesthood is firmer, which is evident, because it was set up with an oath. Therefore, it is necessary that something better and firmer be obtained by it.

But it should be noted that a priest is a mediator between God and the people: ‘I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you’ (Date: 5:5). But a priest should bring God and the people to

concord. And this is done, as it were, by a pact dealing with temporal goods, in which only the affection for carnal things rested, as it says in Ps. 72 (v. 5): ‘For what have I in heaven? and besides you what do I desire upon earth?’ Consequently, it was fitting that another priest should come to be a surety, i.e., a promise, of a better testament and of a better pact, because it is concerned with spiritual and stable goods; and this is Jesus: ‘I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the convenient which I made with their fathers’ (Jer. 31:31); ‘Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Mt. 4:17).

367. – Then when he says, **the former priests were many in number**, he uses another clause stated in the authority: **You are a priest forever**. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows why this phrase **forever**, is used; secondly, from this he shows that the priesthood of Christ has greater efficacy than the priesthood of Old Testament (v. 25).

368. – He shows that he is the true priest, because the others were prevented by death from continuing, because all must die. Hence, when Aaron died, Eleazar succeeded, as is clear from Numbers (20:28) and so on. For as we notice in natural things, which are signs of spiritual things, incorruptible things are not multiplied under the same species; hence, there is but one sun: so in the spiritual things in the Old Testament, which was imperfect, the priests were multiplied. This was a sign that the priesthood was corruptible, because incorruptible things are not multiplied in the same species. But the priest who is Christ is immortal, for He remains forever as the eternal Word of the Father, from Whose eternity redounds an eternity to His body, because ‘Christ rising from the dead, dies now no more’ (Rom. 6:9). Therefore, because he continues forever, he holds his priesthood permanently. Therefore, Christ alone is the true priest, but others are His ministers: ‘Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ’ (1 Cor. 4:1).

369. – Then (v. 25) he shows His efficacy. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows His efficacy; secondly, the mode of His efficacy (v. 25b).

370. – His efficacy lies in the fact that the cause is more potent than its effect; therefore, a temporal cause cannot produce an eternal effect. But Christ’s priesthood is eternal; but not the Levitical, as has been proved. Therefore Christ **is able to save for all time**. But this could not be done, unless He had divine power: ‘Israel is saved in the Lord with an eternal salvation’ (Is. 45:17).

371. – But the mode is that He goes by Himself to God. And he describes that mode from three standpoints, namely, from the excellence of His power, of His nature, and of His piety. Of His power, indeed, because by Himself.

But on the other hand one who goes to another is distant from him. But Christ is not distant from God. I answer that in those words the Apostle shows forth the two natures: namely, the human according to which it befits Him to come to God, because in it He is distant from God (but He does not go from a state of guilt to a state of grace, but He goes by the intellect's contemplation and by love and by the attainment of glory), and the divine nature by the fact that he says that He goes to God by Himself. For if He were pure man, He could not go by Himself: 'No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draw him' (Jn. 6:44). Therefore, when the Apostle says that He comes by Himself, he is showing forth His power: 'Walking in the greatness of his strength' (Is. 63:1). Therefore, He comes as man, but by Himself as God.

372. – He shows the excellence of His nature when he says, **always living**; for otherwise His priesthood would come to an end: 'I was dead and behold I am living forever and ever' (Rev. 1:18).

373. – He shows the excellence of His piety when he says, **to make intercession for them**, because, although He is so powerful, so lofty, yet along with this He is pious, for He makes intercession for us: 'We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just' (1 Jn. 2:1). He interposes for us, first, His human nature, which He assumed for us by representing; secondly, His most holy soul's desire, which He had for our salvation and with which He intercedes for us. Another version has, 'coming by Him,' and then those whom He saves are designated, because they come to God by faith in Him: 'Being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace' (Rom. 5:1).

374. – Then when he says, **for it was fitting that we have such a high priest**, he shows from Christ's excellence the excellence of His priesthood. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that the perfections of the conditions required for the priesthood of the Old Law suited Him; secondly, that He has no imperfections (v. 27).

375. – So he sets down four qualities in Him that were supposed to be in the priesthood of the Law: first, that he is holy: 'They offer the burnt offerings of the Lord and the bread of their God, and therefore they shall be holy' (Lev. 21:6). But Christ had this perfectly. For holiness implies purity consecrated to God: 'Therefore, also the Holy which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God' (Lk. 1:35); 'That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:20); 'The saint of saints will be anointed' (Dan 9:24). Secondly, he should be innocent: 'Let them keep my precepts that they may not fall into sin' (Lev. 22:9). But, properly speaking, innocence is purity toward one's neighbor: 'The innocent in hands, and clean of heart: who has not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor' (Ps. 23:4). But Christ was completely innocent, being One Who did not sin 'I have walked in my innocence' (Ps. 25:11). Thirdly, that he be unstained and this in regard to himself: 'Whosoever of our seed through their

families has a blemish, he shall not offer bread to his God' (Lev. 21:17). Of Christ it is said in a figure: 'It shall be a lamb without blemish' (Ex. 12:5). Fourthly, he must be separated from sinners: 'He shall not mingle the stock of his kindred with the common people of his nation' (Lev. 21:15). But Christ was perfectly separated from sinners: 'Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly nor stood in the way of sinners' (Ps. 1:1). This is, of course, true in regard to a like life: 'His life is not like other men's' (Wis. 2:15), but not in regard to His dealings with others, because 'He conversed with men' (Bar. 3:38) and this with a view to their conversion: 'Why does your master eat with sinners?' (Mt. 9:11). And to such a degree He was separated that He was made higher than the heavens, i.e., **exalted above the heavens**: 'He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high' (Heb. 1:3). Therefore, he is a sufficiently competent priest.

376. – Then when he says, **He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins**, he removes from Him anything that was imperfect in the priesthood of the Law. But what was imperfect was that he needed the sacrifices of atonement: 'He shall offer the calf for himself; and the goat for the people (Lev. 16:11). Therefore, he prayed for himself; and not only once but frequently. The reason for this is that the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests: 'A weak man and of a short time' (Wis. 9:5). But the word of the oath established the Son (Who had none of these imperfections, but was completely perfect), Who is after the Law, a priest to continue forever. For He did not offer for His own sins but for ours: 'He was wounded for our iniquities' (Is. 53:5). Nor did He offer for us frequently, but only once: 'Christ died for our sins' (1 Pt 3:18). For His one offering is enough to take away the sins of the entire human race.

8-1

Heb. 8:1-5

¹Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord. ³For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”

377. – Having proved the excellence of Christ’s priesthood over that of the Levitical on the part of the person, the Apostle now proves the same on the part of the priesthood itself. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows in a general way that Christ’s priesthood is more excellent than that of the Old Law; secondly, in detail (chap. 9). The first is divided into two parts: first, he states his thesis; secondly, he explains it (v. 3). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states the way in which he will present his teaching; secondly, he prefaces what he means to say (v. 1b).

378. – He says, therefore: **Now the point in what we are saying is this** [recapitulation]. A recapitulation is a brief synthesis containing many things. The word comes from ‘caput’ or ‘head,’ because, just as in the head are virtually and, as it were, summarily, contained all the things which are in the body, is in a recapitulation everything that has been said.

379. – Then (v. 1b) he prefaces what he means to say: first, the dignity of this priesthood; secondly, its office (v. 2).

380. – Its dignity is **that we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven**. The throne is judicial power, which befits certain persons as ministers of God, as all kings: ‘All the kings of the earth will adore him’ (Ps. 71:11), and all prelates: ‘Let a man so account of us as of Christ’s ministers (1 Cor. 4:1). Therefore, because Christ has judicial power, He is said to sit: ‘For the Father has given all judgment to the Son’ (Jn. 5:22). But because He has this in the most excellent manner after God, He sits on the right hand of majesty in the heavens, i.e., in the more prominent goods: ‘He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high’ (Heb. 1:3).

381. – The expression, ‘is seated,’ can be referred to Christ as God, and then He is seated in that way, because He has the same authority as the Father, although distinct in person; and so ‘majesty’ is taken for

the person of the Father. Or, to Christ as man: and this is more in keeping with the Apostle's intention, because he is speaking about the high priesthood of Christ, Who is a high priest as man. So He is seated in that way, because the assumed humanity has a certain association to the godhead; and He sits at the right hand to judge: 'Your majesty has been elevated above the heavens' (Ps. 8:3); 'He gave him power to judge, because he is the Son of man' (Jn. 5:27).

382. – Then when he says, **a minister of the holies**, he shows the dignity of his office. He says, minister of the sanctuary [holies], i.e., of the holy precincts, namely, of the sanctuary. For the ministers of old received the ministry of guarding sacred things and serving the tabernacle. But Christ had this in a more excellent manner, because He is a minister, not inasmuch as He is God, for then He is the author, but inasmuch as He is man: 'And passing he will minister until them' (Lk. 12:37). For the humanity of Christ is an organ of the divinity. Therefore, He is the minister of the holies, because He administers the sacraments of grace in the present life and of glory in the future. He is also the minister of the true tent [tabernacle] that cannot be removed' (Is. 33:20); 'Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle?' (Ps. 14:1). But the man Christ is a minister because all the goods of glory are dispensed by Him. But he says, **of the true**, for two reasons: first, because of its difference from the Old, which was a figure of it: 'Now all these things happened to them in figure' (1 Cor. 10:11). The New, therefore, is the truth of the former. Therefore, it is true, i.e., containing the truth in relations to the figure. Secondly, because the former was made by a man, but the other, namely, of grace and of glory by God alone: 'The Lord will give grace and glory' (Ps. 83:12); 'The grace of God, life everlasting' (Rom. 6:23). Hence, he says, **which is set up not by man but by the Lord**: 'We know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in heaven' (2 Cor. 5:1).

383. – Then (v. 3) he explains in detail. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows that Christ is a minister of certain holy things; secondly, that they are not of the Old Law (v. 4); thirdly, that He is a minister of greater things (v. 6).

384. – He forms the following argument: **Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices**; and in this respect He is called a minister of the holies. But Christ is a high priest, as has been stated above. Therefore, it is necessary that He have something to offer: 'Every priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that He may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin' (Heb. 5:1). The sacrifice is offered with animals; the gifts with anything else: 'They offer the burnt offerings of the Lord and the bread of their God' (Lev. 21:6). But because it was necessary that Christ have something to offer, He offered Himself. But it was a clean oblation, because His flesh had no stain of sin: 'And it shall be a lamb without blemish, a male, of one year' (Ex. 12:5). Furthermore, it was suitable, because it was fitting that a man should satisfy for man: 'He offered himself unspotted unto God' (Heb. 9:14). It was also fit to be immolated, because His flesh was mortal: 'God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and sin' (Rom. 8:3). Also it was the same as the one to whom it was

offered: 'I and the Father are one' (Jn. 10:30). And it unites to God those for whom it is offered: 'That they may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us' (Jn. 17:21).

385. – Then (v. 4) he shows that Christ is not a minister of the sacrifices of the Law. In regard to this he does three things: first, he introduces a consequence; secondly, he gives the reason (v. 4b); thirdly, he proves it by an authority (v. 4c).

386. – The consequence is this: **If he were on earth** (this is the antecedent), **he would not be a priest at all** (this is the consequent). Hence, the consequence is one conditional proposition. And it is read in a number of ways: first, according to a Gloss: for 'if that which is offered were on earth, he would not be a priest.' This can be understood in two ways: in one way so that the sense would be: If that which is offered were something earthly, Christ would not be a priest. As if to say: There would be no need for a priesthood, because there would be many to offer such things.

But was not the flesh of Christ earthly? I answer that materially speaking it was earthly: 'The earth is given into the hand of the wicked' (Jb. 9:24). But it is said not to be earthly by reason of the union: 'He that comes from heaven is above all' (Jn. 3:31), i.e., the Son of God, Who united it to Himself. Also, by reason of the active power of the Holy Spirit, Who formed it; and by reason of the fruit, because His oblation is not ordained to obtaining something earthly: 'You are of this world; I am not of this world' (Jn. 8:23). This is the first and better explanation.

The second is this: 'Even if,' i.e., although that which is offered 'is on earth,' because it is necessary that something be offered, 'He would not be a priest,' but someone worthy, because no one could be found worthy to offer it.

387. – There are three readings in which the one offering is understood: first, in general, so that the sense is this: If there were another earthly priest, who could offer heavenly things, Christ would not be a priest. Another is of Christ specifically: If Christ were an earthly priest, the right of the priesthood would not belong to Him, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. Still another is the following: If Christ were still on earth, in the sense that He had not yet ascended, He would not be a priest, because He would not have completed His priesthood.

388. – But according to the first explanation the reading is continued in the following way: There would be many who according to the law would offer such gifts, namely, **those who serve a copy [exemplar] and shadow of heavenly things**. The sacraments of the Old Law were figures of other things in two respects: first, in regard to knowledge; secondly, in regard to fulfillment. In regard to knowledge he says, exemplar, because in the Old Law, as in an exemplar could be read that to which our knowledge should be led.

But it seems that he is speaking in an improper sense: for an exemplar is prior to that of which it is an exemplar, namely, an example. But heavenly things are prior and were not made according to a

likeness of the Old Law, but rather conversely. I answer that something is said to be prior in two ways: in one way, absolutely, and that is the way the objection proceeds; in another way, in relation to its end, and then it is true that those are not prior.

In regard to the second he says, **a shadow**, because just as a shadow represents a body without ever becoming a body, so those things represented the New Testament: ‘For the Law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things’ (Heb. 10:1).

389. – Then he proves the reasonableness of the consequence when he says, **when Moses was about to erect the tabernacle, he was instructed by God saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain’** (Ex. 25:40), because inferior things naturally tend to a likeness of superior things. For the Lord wished to lead us by sensible things to intelligible and spiritual things: ‘Do you know the order of heaven, and can you set down the reason thereof on the earth?’ (Jb. 38:33).

Heb. 8:6-10b

⁶But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second. ⁸For he finds fault with them when he says: “The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; ⁹not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord. ¹⁰This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts.”

390. – Having proved that Christ is a high priest and, consequently, a minister of holy things, but not according to the Old Law, the Apostle now shows that He is a minister of greater and better things than they had been. In regard to this he does three things: first, he prefaces his intent; secondly, he assigns its cause (v. 6b); thirdly, he proves (v. 7).

391. – He says, therefore: I say that He does not have anything earthly to offer; but now, i.e., in the time of grace, **he has obtained**, i.e., received by lot, **a better ministry**, i.e., a worthier priesthood. The priesthood of Christ is called a ministry, because it does not belong to Him except in the sense that He was a minister as a man: ‘I say that Christ Jesus was minister of the circumcision for the truth of God’ (Rom. 15:8). But he says, **he has obtained**, i.e., received by lot, because what is obtained by lot is awaited from the Lord: ‘My lots are in your hands’ (Ps. 30:16). Therefore, all things that happen according to the dispensation of divine decree are said to be given by lot; and such are the effects of grace: ‘In whom we also are called by lot’ (Eph. 1:11), i.e., by divine election, because when human judgment fails, men consult God’s choice and arrangement by casting lots, as happened in the choice of Matthias (Ac. 1:26). Hence it says in Proverbs (16:33): ‘Lots are cast into the lap, but they are disposed of by the Lord.’ Christ, indeed, obtained that ministry by lot, i.e., by divine dispensation.

392. – Then when he says, **which is as much more excellent than the Old as the covenant he mediates is better**, he assigns the cause why this ministry is greater. For every priest is a mediator. But He is the mediator of a better covenant, namely, of man to God, because by Him we are made partakers of the divine nature, as it says in 2 Pt. 1:4). He also offers our gifts to God; therefore, the Apostle says: ‘The mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 2:5). In the Old Testament temporal things were promised: ‘If you be willing, and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land’ (Is. 1:19); but here heavenly things. Therefore, this one is better in regard to what it promises men. Also, in the Old

Law there were precepts pertaining to the worship of God, namely, the ceremonial precepts, and some that pertained to correct conduct, namely, the moral precepts, which continue; but the others do not. But in the New Law counsels are added to the precepts and they are given to the perfect, who are capable of spiritual things. Consequently, the precepts remain the same, but the promises are different, because there they were a figure, but here the truth expressed by the figure. Therefore, this testament is better throughout.

393. – Then when he says, **For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second**, he proves that the testament of which Christ is mediator is better for the following reason: If the first testament were faultless, another would not be sought to correct its defects. But another is sought, therefore, etc.

But on the other hand it says in Romans (7:7): ‘Is the law sin? God forbid.’ Therefore, it is incorrect to say that it is not faultless. I answer that something can belong to the Law in two ways: either according to its end, and then it is good; or by reason of those to whom it was given, and then it is said to have a fault in two ways: first, because it did not confer the power to cleanse one’s sins: ‘It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away’ (Heb. 10:4). Secondly, because it did not give a helping grace to avoid sins, but merely to recognize them; hence, it was an occasion of sin: ‘For I had not known concupiscence, if the law did not say: Thou shalt not covet’ (Rom. 7:7). And so it is said not to have been faultless, because in it men remained in their sins.

But he says, **there would have been no occasion for a second**. For just as a body is never altogether at rest but is always changing until it reaches its due place, so, as long as something is had imperfectly, desire does not rest but always stretches beyond, until it comes to what is perfect. Therefore, the place for a second was sought by man, who desired, but much more by God, Who is said to seek because of his desire for our salvation.

394. – Then (v. 8) he proves the truth of the consequent, namely, that a place is sought for a testament; and this on the authority of Jeremiah (3:31): **The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**. In regard to this he does two things: first, he prefaces the authority; secondly, he argues from it. In regard to the first he does two things: first, he prefaces the prophecy about giving a new testament; secondly, he describes it (v. 9). Again, the first is divided into three parts: in the first he shows that the time for giving the New Testament was favorable; secondly, the perfection of the New Testament (v. 8b); thirdly, to whom it was given (v. 8c).

395. – He says, therefore: For the Lord finds fault, not with the Law but with them who were under the Law, and says: **Behold, the days shall come and I will establish with house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant**. This is the authority, which is not given in exactly those words but with a few changes. For in Jeremiah (31:31) we read: ‘Behold the days shall come, says the Lord, and I will

make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, in that day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: the covenant which they made void and I had dominion over them.’ Thus, it is evident that a few words were changed.

He says in regard to the time being favorable: **the days shall come**, i.e., the time of grace, which is compared to a day and which is illuminated by the sun of justice: ‘The night is passed, and the day is at hand’ (Rom. 13:12).

396. – In regard to the perfection of the New Covenant he says, I will perfect a new covenant. He says, **I will perfect**, which implies perfection: ‘Behold I make all things new’ (Rev. 21:5). But that word, **perfect**, is not found there, but Revelation uses it to signify the perfection of the New Testament: ‘The Lord shall make a consumption and an abridgement in the midst of all the land’ (Is. 10:23). For the New Covenant was perfect in regard to instructing until life, and this instruction extends not only to general information about justice, but to perfect information: ‘Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt. 5:20). Furthermore, in the Old Testament there were only figures, but in the New the truth of the figures; so the New completes and perfects the Old.

397. – In regard to the third he says, **with the house of Israel and Judah**.

But is it given to the Jews alone? No, because ‘all are not Israelites that are of Israel’ (Rom. 9:6); furthermore, ‘not they that are the children of the flesh are the children of God, but they that are the children of the promise, are accounted for the seed’ (Rom. 9:8). They, therefore, who have obtained God’s grace are Israel by faith and Judah by confession: ‘With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation’ (Rom. 10:10). But he says, **with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**, for three reasons: first, because Christ personally preached to the Jews but not to the Gentiles: ‘I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel’ (Mt. 15:24). Secondly, because the Gentiles were made partakers of the New Testament as a graft inserted in a good olive tree partakes of its fatness (Rom. 11:17). Thirdly, because in the time of Rehoboam and Jeroboam the kingdom of Judah was divided from the kingdom of the ten tribes which continued in idolatry; but the kingdom of Judah clung more to God, but not altogether. Therefore, he touched both.

398. – Then (v. 9) he describes the New Covenant: first, by its difference from the Old; secondly, by its own qualities. In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the distinction between the Old and New Testaments; secondly, the infirmity of the Old (v. 9b).

399. – For someone could ask: Is the New like the Old? Therefore, as though answering this he says: No, because it is **not like the covenant I made with their fathers**. In this he shows that the Old is not to be observed along with the New: ‘Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage’ (Gal. 5:1);

‘Neither do they put new wine into old bottles’ (Mt. 9:27); ‘so that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter’ (Rom 7:6). For if something is found in the Old which the Gentiles are supposed to observe, it must be referred to the spiritual meaning, as it says in Is (19:21): ‘They shall worship him with sacrifices and offerings,’ all of which is to be understood spiritually.

400. – Then (v. 9b) he shows the defect of the Old Testament: first, from the way it was delivered; secondly, from the outcome (v. 9b).

401. – For the Old Testament was delivered to servants and to the infirm: to servants, because they had at one time left their thralldom in Egypt, in regard to which he says, to lead them out of the land of Egypt: ‘The one from Mount Sinai, engendering unto bondage, which is Hagar’ (Gal. 4:24), and because it was a law of servile fear: ‘You have not received the spirit of adoption again in fear’ (Rom. 8:15). The slight difference between the Old and New Testaments is fear and love. Likewise, to the infirm, because by itself it could not help; in regard to this he says, I took them by the hand, which is proper to the infirm: ‘You have held me by my right hand’ (Ps. 72:23); ‘For what the law could not do in that it was weak’ (Rom. 8:3). But he says, with their fathers, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with whom He made a special covenant: ‘He has remembered his covenant forever: The word which he commanded to a thousand generations, which he made to Abraham: and his oath to Isaac. And he appointed the same to Jacob for a law’ (Ps. 104:8). But he promised carnal things to those who came out of Egypt.

402. – Then when he says, **for they did not continue in my covenant**, he shows the failings of the Old Testament as far as guilt was concerned. In regard to this guilt he says, **because they did not continue in my covenant**, namely, because it was not written on their hearts. Hence, right after the Law was given, they made a golden calf: ‘They made also a calf in Horeb, and they adored the graven thing’ (Ps. 105:19). In regard to punishment he says, **so I paid no heed to them**, for a person is said not to regard something, when he permits it to perish. So he regarded them not, because He permitted them to be destroyed by the destroyer: ‘You have despised all of them that fall off from your judgments’ (Ps. 118:118).

403. – Then (v. 10) he describes the qualities of the New Testament. In regard to this he does two things: first, he describes the way it was announced; secondly, its effect (v. 10b).

404. – He says, therefore, **This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days**. Making implies a suitable order; hence, he says, **after those days**, i.e., after the Law was given. For a new law should have been given after the old; just as a master is given after a pedagogue, in order that man recognize his infirmity. This, therefore, shows the fitness of the time when the New Testament was given.

The manner in which it was given is twofold: in one way by externals, by proposing words suited to their understanding. This man can do; and that is the way the Old Testament was given. In another way

by acting inwardly, and this is peculiar to God: 'the inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding' (Jb. 32:8). This is the way the New Testament was given, because it consists in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Who instructs inwardly. But it is not enough to know, for one must act. Therefore, He first enlightens the intellect to understand; hence, he says, **I will put my laws into their minds**. He uses the plural, because there are various precepts and counsel. This the Holy Spirit does: 'His unction teaches you' (1 Jn. 2:27); 'He will teach you all things (Jn. 14:26). Furthermore, He inclines the will to act well; hence, it is impressed on their heart. In regard to this he says, **and write them on their hearts**, i.e., I will write charity on their knowledge: 'Above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection' (Col. 3:14); 'The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us' (Rom. 5:5). This is the epistle of which he says in 2 Cor. (3:3): 'Not in ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in the fleshly tablets of the heart.'

8-3

Heb. 8:10b-13

^{10b} “**And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** ¹¹**And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest.** ¹²**For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”** ¹³**In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**

405. – Having mentioned the qualities of the New Testament from the way it was given, the Apostle now describes three of its effects: the first is man’s perfect union with God; the second is perfect knowledge of God (v. 11); the third is the remission of sins (v. 12).

406. – In regard to the first it should be noted that the help of God’s grace is required, if man is to be united with God, because one’s own power is not capable of this: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, have I drawn you, taking pity on you’ (Jer. 31:3): first, therefore, he touches on that union from God’s side; secondly, from man’s side (v. 10c).

He says, therefore: **I will be their God**. Now the name ‘God’ signifies universal providence. Therefore, He is our God, when He has a care for us and draws our hearts to Himself. Therefore, from the fact that he says, **I will be their God**, the effect follows that **they shall be my people**, i.e., they will show themselves my people. For, as Augustine says in *The City of God*: A people is an assembled multitude joined together by the consent of right and common utility. Therefore, when they consent to the rights of the divine law in order to be useful to each other and tend to God, then they are God’s people: ‘And they shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be their God’ (Rev. 21:3).

407. – Then when he says, **And they shall not teach every one his fellow**, he lays down the second effect of the New Testament. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives the sign of that effect; secondly, the effect itself (v. 11b).

408. – The sign of perfect knowledge is that a person does not need to be taught, because teaching is the way to the acquisition of knowledge; therefore, teaching ceases when knowledge has been perfectly acquired.

But does not one person teach another in the New Testament? For according to the letter it seems not. Yet the Apostle styles himself the teacher of the Gentiles: ‘Some pastors and teachers’ (Eph. 4:11); ‘He that teaches, in doctrine’ (Rom. 12:7). I answer that what is stated here can be understood in two ways: in one way as referring to the present state, and then it is not verified universally of all, but only of the original founders of the New Testament, namely, the Apostles, who were instructed immediately by

God when 'he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures' (Lk. 24:25).

Therefore, the Apostles were made knowers perfectly and were not instructed by others, but received infused wisdom directly from Christ. In another way, as referring to the future state in heaven, to which we are brought by the New Testament but not by the Old. And so what is said here is universally true.

409. – But men in glory are equal to angels, not greater. Yet according to Dionysius one angel can teach another by enlightening him. Therefore, a man in glory can teach another one. I answer that there are two kinds of knowledge in the good angels: the one makes them beatified, namely, the knowledge of the divinity, which alone makes them beatified, as Augustine says in the *Confessions*: 'Blessed is he that knows you.' The other is the knowledge of anything distinct from God, such as God's effects, and this knowledge does not cause beatitude. Therefore, in regard to the first, one does not teach another, because one is not beatified by means of another, but by God directly: 'In your light we shall see the light' (Ps. 35:10). But in regard to the other, which is concerned with certain mysteries, one does teach another; and this will continue perhaps until the end of the world, as long as the execution of God's effects continues; hence he adds, **know the Lord**. As if to say: He does not receive God's knowledge. He says, his neighbor and brother, because even though according to Augustine all men must be loved out of charity, if you cannot benefit all, then you should benefit those who are joined to you either naturally, as blood relatives, or by some other tie, as your neighbor.

410. – **For all shall know me from the least to the greatest of them.** This is the reason why one will not teach another, because all will know the Lord: 'We shall see him as he is' (1 Jn. 3:2). But it is in this vision that beatitude consists: 'This is eternal life: That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3); 'Let him that glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me' (Jer. 9:24). And the blessed have this teaching not from one another but from God alone: 'All your children shall be taught of the Lord' (Is. 54:13). But the phrase, **from the least to the greatest** can be understood in two ways: in one way so that the older saints are called greater; then the greater and lesser would be taken according to the order of time. Therefore, all will know God, because each will receive his own penny (Mt. 20:10). Or he says this to show the different rewards, because although all will know, one will know more than another: 'He that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven' (Mt. 5:19). For the reward corresponds to the merit; and this is against those who say that all punishments and all merits will be equal and, consequently, all rewards. But against this opinion 1 Corinthians (15:41) states: 'Star differs from star in glory.'

411. – Then when he says, **because I will be merciful to their iniquities**, he states the third effect, which is the remission of guilt, which the Old Testament was unable to do: 'It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away' (Heb. 10:4).

He says, therefore: **I will be merciful**. But iniquity differs from sin, because iniquity is opposed to justice which, strictly speaking, is always toward someone else; therefore, iniquity refers to that by which one person injures another: ‘Your wickedness may hurt a man that is like you’ (Jb. 35:8). But a sin refers to any defect in an action, because it implies a disorder; hence, iniquity is, properly speaking, against one’s neighbor, but sin against oneself. This is, strictly speaking, but in a wide sense both are the same. In regard to this he says, **I will be merciful toward their iniquities**, namely, in the present life by relaxing the punishment; **and their sins I will remember no more**, namely, in the future by punishing sins: ‘I will not remember all his iniquities which he has done’ (Ez. 18:22): ‘Forgive us our sins for your name’s sake’ (Ps. 78:9); ‘Remember not our former iniquities’ (Ps. 78:8); ‘The gifts and the call of God are without repentance’ (Rom. 11:29), i.e., God does not repent that He remitted our sins here, as though to punish them again.

412. – Then when he says, **in speaking of a new covenant**, he argues as though from an authority he cited. And he forms this argument: A new is said only in relation to an old. But whatever is called old is, as it were, close to cessation. Therefore, in speaking of a new covenant, **he treats the first as obsolete**, i.e., it gives us to understand that the former is old. **And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away**. Therefore, if it is old, it should be cast out: ‘The new coming on, you shall cast away the old’ (Lev. 26:10). Therefore, in saying, **a new**, he designates the cessation of the old. But, properly speaking, nothing is ancient except what is subject to time; and things subject to time cease in time. Therefore, it is fitting that the old should cease. But he says, **and becoming obsolete**, in regard to inanimate things; but **grows old** in regard to animate things. Yet it should be noted that where we have, **their sins**, another version has ‘sin’ and then it refers to original sin, which is common to all.

9-1

Hebrews 9:1-5

¹Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. ²For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. ³Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, ⁴having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; ⁵above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

413. – Having showed in general the dignity of the New Testament as compared to the Old, the Apostle now shows the same in particular by reaching down to the individuals in each Testament. In regard to this he does two things: first, he compares things of the Old Testament with those of the New to show the dignity of the New; secondly, he clarifies some things he had presupposed (chap. 10). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he explains what was present in the Old Testament; secondly, he shows what it signified (v. 8); thirdly, from these facts he argues to his conclusion (v. 15). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he describes the qualities of the Old Testament; secondly, he explains what he had said (v. 2).

414. – In regard to the first it should be noted that both the Old and New Testaments were instituted in order that by them the soul might come to God. But two things are needed for this, namely, withdrawal from sin and union with God. The first is brought about by justification, and the second by sanctification; and in both Testaments justification and sanctification took place. Hence, he says: So we have said that the former one had grown old. But what were the qualities of that Old Testament? It was such that it **had regulations for worship**, i.e., of latreia. For in the Old there were washings, by which they were cleansed not from the stain of sin, but from certain irregularities, which hindered them from the worship of God. Thus, after touching a corpse or anything unclean, they could not enter the tabernacle, until they were purified by certain washings. Therefore, they were called the 'justifications of worship', because by them they were made fit for divine worship. This is treated in Leviticus (chap. 22). 'Justifications, i.e., washings, purified so that they could approach' (Jerome). But their sanctification was a worldly sanctuary.

415. – Now 'worldly' is sometimes taken for any duration: 'forever and ever' (Ps. 109:3); sometimes it signifies the world itself: 'Demas has left me, loving this world' (2 Tim. 4:9). Therefore, that sanctification can be called 'worldly,' because it is temporal and not perpetual. But the Greek text does not take it that way, because it says, 'mundane holy.' Hence, a difference between the New Testament

and the Old was that, although both are bodily, the former contains grace and is holy, and in it the divine power works salvation under cover of visible things. This was not so in the Old Testament, because it contained no grace in itself: 'How turn you again to the weak and needy elements?' (Gal. 4:9).

416. – Then when he says, **For a tent was prepared**, he explains what he has said: first, in regard to the disposition of the tabernacle; secondly, as to the ministry of the priests (v. 6).

417. – In regard to the first, to understand the literal meaning, it should be noted that the Lord commanded a tabernacle to be made in the desert. It was to be twenty cubits or paces long, and ten wide, with an entrance facing the east. In front of the entrance a curtain hung from four pillars. There was a small tent in which was the altar of holocausts. But all this was left unmentioned by the Apostle, because it contributed nothing to his thesis.

In the tabernacle as you faced west, before an area ten cubits long and ten wide was hung a veil, which divided one area ten cubits long from the other twenty cubits long. The area twenty cubits long is called the sanctuary and the first tabernacle, the other of ten cubits in length is called the holy of holies and the second tabernacle.

418. – This distinction can be explained in two ways: in one way, because the things of the Old Testament were a figure of the New, and the New a figure of the heavenly country. Thus, therefore, by the first tabernacle was signified the Old Testament, and by the second, the New. In another way, by the first tabernacle the present Church, and by the second, heavenly glory. Therefore, inasmuch as it signifies the Old Testament, it is a figure of a figure; but inasmuch as it signifies the present Church, which in turn signifies future glory, it is a figure of the truth in regard to each. In regard to these he does two things: first, he describes what was in the first; secondly, in the second (v. 3).

419. – In the first tabernacle were three things, namely, the golden candlestick on the south. It was made in the following way: from a long shaft proceeded six branches, as it were, six arms, namely, three from the right side and three from the left, so that at the top were seven branches, in each of which burned a lamp. Then in each arm were four things, namely, the arm which divided into three cups, namely, cups, bowls, and lilies, because two parts were joined there. At the end of each part was a cup in which two cups are joined in the manner of a nut, and two revolving bowls and two leaves of a lily. Then in the northern area was a golden table upon which twelve freshly baked loaves were placed on the Sabbath, and over each one was incense burning on a paten of gold. Those loaves, which were called the Bread of the Presence, remained there until the Sabbath, when they were removed and others put in their place. Furthermore, in the middle was a golden altar for burning sweet-smelling thyme to prevent the house from stinking from the vast quantity of blood pouring from the victims. By the candlestick, which gives light, and by the table was designated that those who serve the altar should live off the altar. Therefore, he says, **for a tabernacle**, i.e., the front part of the tabernacle, was made first, in which were the

candlesticks, which were one as to substance but many as to branches. This was to the south: and a table to the north and the presentation of the loaves, i.e., the Bread of the Presence. This part is called the Holy Place. All this is treated in detail in Exodus (chaps. 25, 26, 27).

420. – Then when he says, **Behind the veil the second tabernacle called the Holy of Holies**, he describes the things that were in the second tabernacle, namely, the ark of the covenant made of incorruptible sethim wood, covered about on every part, i.e., inside and outside, with gold. In the ark were three things: a golden urn that had manna in memory of the benefit bestowed on them; the rod of Aaron that had blossomed (Num. 17:8) in memory of Aaron's priesthood, lest a stranger should presume to approach, and the tables of the covenant in memory of the Law. Then, over the ark were two Cherubim, who touched each other with two wings and touched the two sides of the tabernacle with the other two. Between the two wings, with which they touched each other, was a golden table of the same length and width as the ark, namely, two cubits in length and a cubit and a half in width, overshadowing the mercy seat. Hence, it served as a throne from which God would listen, to be re-propitiated toward the people: 'You that sit upon the cherubim before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh' (Ps. 79:2). But the ark was, as it were, a foot stool. The two cherubim facing each other looked at the mercy seat. But the Apostle adds a fourth item, namely, the golden altar of incense, concerning which some say that it was the altar between the holies, as has been said. The priests entered every day into the holies, which was outside, to perform the mysteries; but into the holy of holies the high priest once a year with blood. Then he filled that censer with thyme, so that from the smoke ascended a cloud which covered the holy of holies, so that it would not be seen by anyone outside. Those, therefore, are the things which were beyond the veil, which was the second tabernacle and called the Holy of Holies on account of its dignity, as the Blessed Mother is called the Virgin of virgins anthonomastically, having a golden censer and the ark in which was a golden urn, over which, namely, the ark (not that they had feet over it, but wings only) were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, namely, with their wings, of which it is not necessary to speak now, i.e., pursue with words, in detail.

421. – But in 1 Kg (8:9) it says that 'in the ark there was nothing else but the two tables of stone.' I answer that this is true as regards its principal purpose, because that was what the ark was principally made for, as it says in Exodus (25:16).

422. – In regard to what they signified, it should be noted that all the ceremonies of the Law were ordained to one thing according to that state; but to something else, insofar as they were figurative, namely, inasmuch as they represented Christ. As to the first, they were all instituted to represent God's magnificence. But that was represented only in the effects. Those effects have, as it were, a twofold world: one is upper, namely, that of incorporeal substances, and that by the holy of holies; the other of the lower, sense-perceptible world, and that was represented by the Holy Place. In the upper world are three things: God, the reasons of things and the angels. But God is utterly incomprehensible; therefore, there

was a seat left unoccupied, because He cannot be comprehended by a creature except from his effects. That seat was the propitiatory or mercy seat, as has been said. But the angels were signified by the cherubim on account of their wisdom; hence, even the philosophers call angels intellectual substances. There were two, to designate that they were not set there to be adored, because it had been said in Deuteronomy (6:4): 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord.' The fact that they looked at the mercy seat shows that they do not cease contemplating God: 'Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven' (Mt. 18:10). The reasons of things are signified by the ark. But the ones in this world pertain to wisdom, which is signified by the tablets, or to power, which is signified by the rod; or to goodness, which is signified by the manna, which is sweet, because whatever sweetness is found in the creature is from God's goodness. But because the reasons of things, which exist intelligibly in God, exist in a sense-perceptible manner in bodily creatures, therefore, just as there was an intellectual light in the tablets, so in the holies there was a corporeal light. There the manna, here the loaves; there the rod, here the altar, which pertains to the priest's office.

423. – But inasmuch as Christ was prefigured by them, they are all found in Him: first, as to the holies, for He is a candlestick of light: 'I am the light of the world' (Jn. 8:12). In it are six orders: three on the left, namely, the perfect of the Old Testament; and three on the right, namely, of the New Testament. They are designated in Ezekiel (chap. 14): By Noah, prelates; by Daniel, contemplatives; by Job, the actives. Those branches receive light and impart it: 'As every man has received grace, ministering the same one to another' (1 Pt 4:10). The cups furnish the drink of wisdom; the bowls for ready obedience; the lilies for the end of eternal life; the seven lamps are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Again, Christ is a table of refreshment. The twelve loaves are the doctrine of the Apostles and their successors; they are put out on the Sabbath of hope to the Sabbath of hope; and if in the meantime one is removed by death, another is substituted. But on the great Sabbath all will be removed. In the interior was the propitiatory, and Christ is the propitiation of our sins' (1 Jn. 2:2). The two angels are the two testaments looking peacefully at Christ; or all the angels serving Christ in concord and unity of spirit: 'Angels came and ministered to him' (Mt. 4:11); 'Thousands of thousands ministered to him' (Dan 7:10); 'All are ministering spirits' (Heb. 1:14). They desire to look on Christ and they overshadow the propitiatory, i.e., guard Christ's Church. Or because by their ministry occurred visions and apparitions in which Christ was prefigured overshadowingly. The ark made of sethim wood is Christ's pure and most precious flesh, which is called a gold urn because of His wisdom full of the sweetness of the godhead. The tablets are His wisdom. The rod is His eternal priesthood, or it is Christ's power; and the manna the sweetness of grace given by the priesthood of Christ or by obedience to His commandments, as a man obeys the power. But because no one has grace without having sinned, except Christ and His mother, it is necessary to have a mercy seat.

9-2

Heb. 9:6-10

⁶These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people. ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰but deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

424. – Having described the things which pertain to the Old Testament so far as the disposition of the tabernacle was concerned, the Apostle now continues with the office of the ministers: first, with those who look to the holies; secondly, with those who look to the holy of holies (v. 7).

425. – To understand the literal meaning of this, it should be noted that, as has been stated above, there was in the forepart of the tabernacle near the center the altar of thyme or of incense, which is the same thing, and the golden candlestick; but at the southern part opposite, the table of proposition. Every day in the morning and in the evening the priest entered the holies for two reasons: to dress the lamps and to renew the incense, in order that light and all good odor might be continually present in the holies. He says, therefore: **Now these preparations**, namely, which pertain to the appearance of the tabernacle, **having been thus made, the priests go continually into the outer tent [first tabernacle] performing their ritual duties**: not to sacrifice in the holies, because they sacrificed on the altar of holocausts in front of the door of the tabernacle under the sky; but he calls the renewal of the incense and the devotion of the offerers a sacrifice.

426. – Then (v. 7) he mentions the office of the ministers in regard to the holy of holies. Here it should be noted that, as it says in Leviticus (16:30) on the day of atonement (which occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month, namely, September, which is the seventh month after our March, which coincides with part of our April, when the Jewish year begins: ‘This month shall be to you the beginning of months: it shall be the first in the months of the year’ (Ex. 12:2), for they began their month with the full moon which always begins in March, unless prevented by an embolism), the high priest offered a calf for himself and his whole house, and a goat for the sin of the people. When these were immolated, he took some of their blood and filled the thurible with the burning coals from the altar of holocausts, which was in the court in front of the tabernacle, and with all these things entered into the holy of holies to expiate

the tabernacle with blood, sprinkling some of the blood on the veil. After he came out, he used the same blood to anoint the altar of incense. He did this once a year.

427. – Hence, he says, **but in the second tabernacle**, which is called the holy of holies, **only the high priest goes, and he but once a year**. A Gloss says that he could enter oftener without blood, but only once with blood. But this is recorded as happening only when the camp site was changed, because when Aaron and his sons entered to wrap the sanctuary and to appoint the burdens every man was to carry, as is clear from Num. 4:16. Nevertheless, once a year the high priest entered and not without taking blood, which he offered for himself and the people's errors, i.e., sins: 'They err that work evil' (Prov 14:22). For every wicked person is ignorant, as it says in the *Ethics*. But this is treated in Leviticus (chap. 16), where the rite of atonement is described.

Mystically, by the first tabernacle is designed the present Church, in which the faithful should sacrifice themselves: 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God' (Rom. 12:1) 'A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit' (Ps. 50:19). They should also sacrifice their property in alms: 'By such sacrifices God's favor is obtained' (Heb. 13:16). But the high priest alone, i.e., Christ in soul and body, entered into the holy of holies, i.e., into the heavenly country.

Yet according to the letter the intention of the Apostle is that the Old Law is signified by the holy, and by the holy of holies the state of the New Testament and heaven, because one enters heaven by the New Law.

428. – Hence, he continues: **the Holy Spirit signifying this**, where he explains what is signified by this: first, in regard to the Old Testament; secondly, in regard to the New (v. 11). In the first part he does two things: first, he describes the office of the ministers in regard to the first; secondly, he gives the reason (v. 9).

429. – It should be noted that the priests entered into the holies every day; but into the second, which was beyond the veil the high priest alone once a year. Hence, in regard to those ministers there were two things there: one that entered everyday in the first; the other that there was a veil in front of the second. Hence, the interposition of the veil signifies that heavenly things were veiled from them. Furthermore, the fact that they did not enter signifies that the Old Testament is not the way to enter heaven before Christ's coming. He says, therefore: I say that this was thus accomplished, the Holy Spirit indicating this: 'Prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pt 1:21). This is against the heretics who say that the Old Testament was not from the Holy Spirit, but from an evil god. By indicating what? That **the way into the holies was not yet made opened, as long as the former tabernacle**, i.e., the Old Testament signified by the first tabernacle, **was still standing**. For as long as the Old Testament endured, the way into the holies, namely, Christ, Who says: 'I am the way' (Jn. 14:6) had not yet come; for He is the door by which one enters into the holies: 'I am the door' (Jn. 10:9). But He was not yet made manifest, because He was still hiding under the shadows of the

figures of the letter: 'For the law having a shadow of the good things to come' (Heb. 10:1), **which is symbolic for the present age**, or leading us to the things which occur at the present time.

430. – Then (v. 9b) he states the reason why the entrance into the holy of holies was closed during the state of the Old Law. For no one enters into it, unless he is perfect: 'It shall be called the holy way: the unclean shall not pass over it' (Is. 35:8). Hence, where there was no cleansing and no perfection, there was no entrance into it. But the Old Testament was unable to make perfect those who served it, because the sacrifice had not yet been offered that would satisfy for the sin of the whole human race; hence, he says. According to this, namely, parable or figure, gifts and sacrifices are offered, which refers to the clause, accomplishing the offices of sacrifice, because gifts of all things and offerings of animals were not offered in the holy of holies, but in the holies or in the court of the tabernacle. But they were unable to cleanse, because they **cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper** that serves with the service of latria, which pertains to divine worship. I say, perfect the conscience. For cleansing is of two kinds: one from the stain of sin and debt of punishment as to the conscience. The Law cannot do this: 'It is impossible that with the blood of the oxen and goats sin should be taken away' (Heb. 10:4); 'Offer sacrifices no more in vain' (Is. 1:13); 'May the Lord be appeased with thousands of rams, or with many thousands of fat he-goats' (Mic 6:7). The other cleansing was in regard to divine service, in order that one might lawfully minister at such sacrifices; and thus it cleansed.

431. – But were many perfect in the Old Law? It seems so; for it was said to Abraham: 'Walk before me and be perfect' (Gen. 17:1). Furthermore, Moses and many others were very saintly and perfect. I answer that although there were many holy and perfect persons then, it was not from the works of the Law: 'The law brought nothing to perfection' (Heb. 7:19); but this was by faith in Christ: 'Abraham believed God and it was reputed to him unto justice' (Gen. 15:6). Therefore, this was not in virtue of the ceremonies and practices of the law: hence, it is frequently stated there: 'And the priest will pray for him' (Lev. 5:10) and in many other places. Therefore, that it cleansed was due to faith. But in the New Testament it says in Mk (16:16): 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' But there is no salvation without the sacraments of the New Law: 'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven' (Jn. 3:5).

432. – But why did they not cleanse the conscience? Because they consisted only in food and drink. But that which is altogether corporeal does not cleanse the soul, because it does not act on the soul. He says, therefore, **in food and drink**, i.e., in distinguishing meats and drinks that were forbidden in the Old Law, because abstaining from these does not cleanse the conscience; or else this refers to the use of the sacrifices, because the priests ate what was offered for sins. For they did not cleanse the conscience: 'Shall the holy flesh take away from your crimes?' (Jer. 11:15).

433. – And **in various ablutions**, because as it says in Mk (7:4), the Jews observed the washing of cups and of pots, and when they returned from the market, they did not eat until they were washed. Against this the Lord says (Mt. 23:25): ‘Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees: because you make clean the outside of the cup and dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness.’ Yet the Apostle is not speaking here about the superstitions of the Pharisees. Therefore, we must go to the other washings commanded in the Law, such as the water in which the priests washed, and the water of purification in the cleansing of leprosy or defilement.

434. – Hence, they are **regulations for the body**. He adds this universally of all. He calls those ceremonies **regulations for the body**, i.e., fleshly, because they pertained only to bodily cleanness, and there was no spiritual power in them. And in order that no one ask: Why were they instituted, if they could not bring perfection; because it would then seem that God instituted them to no purpose, he rejects this when he says, **until the time of correction**. As if to say: It is true that they were instituted uselessly, if they were to continue forever. But as it is necessary first to give a child a pedagogue, and when he reaches perfect age, he is given a mode of behavior based on the judgment of the ruler of the republic; so in the Old Law were instituted things that look to imperfection. But when the perfect time came, the things which lead to perfection should have been introduced. Hence, he says, **until the time of correction**, i.e., in which they could be corrected, not as evil but as imperfect: ‘For the law is good’ (Rom. 7:12); ‘Mildness is come upon us, and we shall be corrected’ (Ps. 89:10).

9-3

Heb. 9:11-14

¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

435. – Having shown the signification of things pertaining to the Old Testament and the first tabernacle, the Apostle now describes the condition of things pertaining to the second tabernacle, which represented the New Testament. Here he does two things: first, he sets forth that signification; secondly, he proves something he had presupposed (v. 13).

436. – It should be noted that if the things already said are considered, five things have already been said of the second tabernacle, namely, who entered it, because it was the high priest; secondly, the dignity and the condition of the place he entered, because it was called the holy of holies; thirdly, how he entered, because he entered with blood; fourthly, when he entered, because once a year; fifthly, why he entered, because it was to expiate for sins. But here the Apostle explains all this, first of all, who enters, namely, Christ. For the high priest is the prince among the priests. But Christ was such: ‘And when the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory’ (1 Pt 5:4); ‘Having therefore a great high priest that has passed into the heavens’ (Heb. 4:14). But every high priest is a dispenser of a testament. However, there are two things to be considered in every testament: namely, the end promised in that testament, and the things handed down in it. But the goods promised in the Old Testament were temporal goods: ‘If you be willing and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land’ (Is. 1:19). Therefore, the other was a high priest of temporal goods; But Christ is the high priest of heavenly goods: ‘Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven’ (Mt. 5:12). Therefore, **He is a high priest of the good things to come**, because by His high priesthood we are brought to goods to come: ‘We shall be filled with the good things of your house’ (Ps. 64:6). Furthermore, figurative things were dispensed in the Old Testament, but Christ dispenses the spiritual things they prefigured: ‘Your Father from heaven will give the good spirit to them that ask him’ (Lk. 11:13). Thus, therefore, by the good things to come can be understood either heavenly goods, and this in regard to the New Testament, or spiritual things, in regard to the Old, which was their figure. This high priest is not negligent, but assisting. For a high priest is a mediator between God and the people; but Christ is a mediator: ‘The mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 2:5): ‘I was the mediator and stood between the

Lord and you' (Dt. 5:5); and therefore, He assists the Father by interceding for us: 'Christ Jesus who also makes intercession for us' (Rom. 8:34). Again, He assists us with his aid: 'He is at my right hand that I be not moved' (Ps. 15:8); 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God' (Ac. 7:55). Thus, it is clear who entered.

437. – Secondly, he shows the dignity of the inner tabernacle when he says, **then through the greater**, and its condition when he says, **and more perfect tabernacle**, inasmuch as it is unmovable: 'Your eyes shall see Jerusalem, a rich habitation, a tabernacle that cannot be removed' (Is. 33:20). But this is the tabernacle of heavenly glory: 'Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle?' (Ps. 14:1). But it is called a tabernacle, because it is the habitation of pilgrims. For it is not due to us by reason of the condition of our nature, but only through grace: 'My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacle of confidence, and in wealthy rest' (Is. 31:18). Therefore, it is greater, because of the measureless multitude of good things, which is designated in the authority cited: 'My people shall sit in the beauty of peace (Is. 31:18); 'O, Israel, how great is the house of God' (Bar. 3:24). But there are two ways of reading the phrase, **by a greater**: in one way, so that it is one phrase as though meaning 'very great;' then the reading is this: When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered into the holy of holies, which, I say, is a very large tabernacle. In another way, so that the 'per' (by) is a preposition, which is expressed better in Greek; then the construction is this: Christ entered into the holies by a greater tabernacle, i.e., more ample and perfect. It was more perfect, because all imperfection ceased there: 'When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away' (1 Cor. 13:10). Furthermore, it is of a different condition, because the Old was made by human hands, but this by the hand of God: 'Your sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established' (Ex. 15:17); 'We know if your earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven' (2 Cor. 5:1); 'For he looked for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God' (Heb. 11:10); hence, he says, **not made with hands**, that is, not of this creation, because it is not made with hands as the Old, nor is it of this creation, i.e., in sensible created goods, but it is in spiritual goods.

438. – Or, by the tabernacle can be understood Christ's body, in which He fought against the devil: 'He has set his tabernacle in the sun' (Ps. 18:6), which is very large, because 'in him dwells all the fullness of the godhead corporeally' (Col. 2:0), and more perfect, 'Because we have seen his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of trace and truth' (Jn. 1:14); and **not made with hands**, because not of human seed: 'A stone was cut out of a mountain without hands' (Dan 2:34).

439. – Thirdly, he shows how he entered, because not without blood; but he with the blood of calves and goats, as it says in Leviticus (chap. 16); but Christ not so, i.e., not with another's blood: **taking not the blood of goats or of calves but his own blood**, which He offered on the cross for our salvation: 'This is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins'

(Mt. 26:28). But he uses the plural, of goats and of calves, not that more than one was offered at one time, but because he entered many times in various years. But Christ is signified by the goat because of the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3); by the calf because of courage and because He uses the two testaments as two horns: 'Horns are in his hands' (Hab. 3:4).

440. – Fourthly, when he entered, because once a year. But Christ throughout all of time, which is as a year, entered **once for all into the holies** and poured out His blood once: 'Christ died once for our sins' (1 Pt 3:18); 'for in that he died for sin, he died once' (Rom. 6:10). Furthermore, He entered once; for from the fact that He entered heaven, He is there always. Hence, he says, **he entered once for all into the holies**.

441. – Fifthly, he shows why He entered, namely, to make an offering for the ignorance of the people, not for His own, because He had none. For the blood of Christ is more powerful, because by it he secured an eternal redemption. As if to say: we are redeemed by that blood; and this forever, because His power is infinite: 'By one oblation he has perfected forever them that are sanctified' (Heb. 10:14). The fact that he says, **secured**, can refer to things, namely, the desire God had for our salvation: 'I have found wherein I may be merciful to him' (Jb. 33:24); 'I desire not the death of him that dies' (Ez. 18:32); or to the desire of the fathers to be redeemed. For no one found a way so suitable as Christ, therefore, he says quite significantly, **secured**.

442. – Then (v. 13) he proves one of the things he had supposed, namely, the statement, **having obtained eternal redemption**. As if to say: I have said that He wrought eternal redemption by His own blood, in which His greatest efficacy appears. That it is so, I prove by arguing from what is less; because if the blood of brute animals accomplished less, the blood of Christ can accomplish what is greater. Hence in regard to this he does two things: first, he lays down the antecedent; secondly, the consequent (v. 14).

443. – In regard to the first it should be noted that there were two cleansings in the Old Law: one took place on the day of atonement, as already stated, and seemed to be directly ordained to cleansing from sin. The other was against legal irregularity, as mentioned in Numbers (19:2), where the Lord commanded Eleazar to take from Moses a red cow without blemish, of full age and which has not carried the yoke, and bring her forth without the camp and immolate her in the sight of all. Then dipping his finger in her blood, he should sprinkle it over against the door of the tabernacle seven times; and then burn her flesh entirely, i.e., her flesh, hide and even her dung. Then the priest was to take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet twice dyed. After this was done, a man that was clean was to gather up the ashes of the cow and pour them forth in a clean place outside the camp. Some of these ashes were to be put in water with which an unclean person, who touched the corpse of a man, was to be sprinkled on the third day, and on the seventh with hyssop. In this way and in no other way could he be cleansed. That is the opinion of the Apostle. Therefore in regard to the first he says, **If the blood of goats and oxen**; but as to the second he

says, **and the ashes of a heifer** being sprinkled sanctify such as are defiled, not by conferring grace, but to the cleansing of the flesh, i.e., from an irregularity carnally hindering them, as though unclean, from divine worship. But they did not take away sins, because, as Augustine says, sometimes by virtue of that sprinkling they were cleansed from bodily leprosy; hence, he says, to the cleansing of the flesh.

444. – Then when he says, **how much more the blood of Christ . . . cleanses our conscience**, he lays down the consequent. As if to say: If blood and ashes can do this, what could Christ's blood do? Certainly much more. Then the Apostle mentions three things, which show the efficacy of Christ's blood: first, he shows whose blood it is, namely, it is Christ's. From this it is evident that His blood cleanses: 'For he will save his people from their sins' (Mt. 1:21). Secondly, the reason why Christ shed His blood, because this was done by the Holy Spirit, through Whose movement and instinct, namely, by the love of God and neighbor He did this: 'When he shall come as a violent stream which the spirit of the Lord drives on' (Is. 59:10). But the Spirit cleanses: 'If the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Sion, and shall wash away the blood of Jerusalem out of the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning' (Is. 4:4). Therefore, he says, **who by the Holy Spirit offered himself**: 'Christ has loved us and has delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness' (Eph. 5:2). Thirdly, he describes His condition, because He is **without blemish**: 'It shall be a lamb without blemish, a male, of one year' (Ex. 12:5); 'What can be made clean by the unclean?' (Sir. 34:4).

445. – But can an unclean priest cleanse? I answer: No, if he acted in his own power, but he acts by the power of Christ's blood, which is as a first cause. Therefore, He would not have acted, unless he were clean.

446. – Yet it should be noted that the blood of those animals merely cleansed from outward stain, namely, from contact with the dead; but the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience inwardly, which is accomplished by faith: 'Purifying their hearts by faith' (Ac. 15:9), inasmuch as it makes one believe that all who adhere to Christ are cleansed by His blood. Therefore, He cleanses the conscience. It also cleanses them from contact with a corpse; but He **from dead works**, namely, sins, which take God from the soul, whose life consists in union by charity. It also cleansed them in order that they might come to the figurative ministry; but the blood of Christ to the spiritual service of God: 'The man that walked in the perfect way, he served me' (Ps. 100:6). Therefore, he says, **to serve the living God**. Furthermore, God is life: 'I am the life' (Jn. 14:6); 'I live forever' (Dt. 43:40). Therefore, it is fitting that one who serves Him be alive: hence, he says, **living God**: 'For as the judge of the people is himself, so also are his ministers' (Sir. 10:2). Therefore, he that would serve God worthily, should be living, as He is.

Heb. 9:15-22

¹⁵Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. ¹⁶For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you.” ²¹And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²²Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

447. – Having explained things done in the Old Testament and disclosed their mystical explanation, the Apostle now uses these facts to prove his thesis, namely that the New Testament is preferred to the Old, because it can do what the Old could not. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states the intended conclusion; secondly, he proves something he had presupposed. The first is divided into two parts: in the first he concludes from the foregoing that Christ is a mediator; secondly, that the Old Testament could not do this (v. 15b).

448. – He says: **Therefore**, i.e., because Christ entered into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption, i.e., leads us to eternal things, which the Old could not do; it was fitting that this testament be distinct from that, as the new from the old: ‘I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah’ (Jer. 31:31); ‘Behold, I make all things new’ (Rev. 21:5). Therefore, **he is the mediator of a new covenant** between God and man: ‘The mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ’ (1 Tim. 2:5). But in every testament there is something promised and something by which that testament is confirmed. But in the New Testament heavenly and spiritual things are promised. Furthermore, that promise was confirmed by the death of Christ. And so, Christ is the mediator of the New Testament, **so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance**. He says, **called**, because this reward is not for our works but from God’s call: ‘Whom he predestinated, them he also called’ (Rom. 8:30); ‘We testified to everyone of you that you could walk worthy of God who has called you unto his kingdom and glory’ (1 Th. 2:12); hence, he says, of the **eternal inheritance**, i.e., of eternal glory, which is our inheritance: ‘He has regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you’ (1 Pt 1:3); Behold the inheritance of the Lord’ (Ps. 126:3); ‘The Lord is the portion of

my inheritance' (Ps. 15:5). But we have that inheritance through the death of Christ; hence, he says, **since a death has occurred**: 'Unto this you are called, that you may inherit a blessing' (1 Pt 3:9). The effect of this death is redemption **from the transgressions under the first covenant**: 'You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, but with the precious blood of an unspotted lamb' (1 Pt 1:18).

449. – But could that redemption from sins have been accomplished in the Old Testament? He answers, No; because those prevarications were under the first covenant. As if to say: because they could not be removed by the power of the sacraments of the former covenant: 'Because we have charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin' (Rom. 3:19).

But is it not a fact that David and many other saints obtained remission of their sins? I answer that so far as entering heaven is concerned, they did not, because the door to life was opened by the death of Christ: for no one entered before Christ's death: 'You also by the blood of your testament have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit, wherein is not water' (Zech 9:11). But so far as the stain of sin was concerned, they obtained it, not in virtue of the sacraments of the Old Law, but by faith in Christ. Thus, therefore, the New Testament is more excellent than the Old, because it has been confirmed by the death of Christ, by which sins are remitted, and because He shows forth the promise.

450. – Then (v. 16) he proves what he had supposed, namely, that the New Testament was confirmed by the death of Christ: first, he proves this on the authority of human law; secondly, on the authority of divine law (v. 18).

451. – He says, therefore: It has been stated that the New Testament was confirmed by the intervening death of Christ, because in order that a will [testament] be in force, the death of the testator must be established. Therefore, the New Testament would have no strength, unless the death of Christ had come in: 'It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people' (Jn. 11:50). But the death of the testator is necessary for two reasons: first, that the testament might be valid, because, since it expresses the last will, it can always be changed before death; hence, he says, **a testament takes effect only at death**, i.e., after death. That is the way the New Testament has been confirmed by the death of Christ: 'this is my blood of the new Testament,' namely, its confirmer and dedicator (Mt. 26:28). Secondly, the death of the testator is necessary, in order that the testament be in force and be efficacious; hence, he says, otherwise it is yet not in force, because no one can seek anything, nor an heir his inheritance by reason of the testament, till after the death of the testator. Therefore, Christ willed to interpose his death for our sake.

452. – Then (v. 18) he proves the same thing on the authority of divine law, by something in the Old Testament: In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows the agreement between the two testaments; secondly, their difference (v. 23). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he made the statement; secondly, he proves (v. 19).

453. – He says, therefore: It has been stated that in order for a testament to have force, the death of the testator must of necessity come in. This should not seem strange, because neither was the first testament ratified, i.e., confirmed, without blood. But that blood prefigured the blood of Christ: ‘All these things happened to them in figure’ (1 Cor. 10:11).

454. – Then (v. 19) he proves his statement, namely, that that testament was not confirmed without blood. He proves this in regard to three things in which blood was used: first, in the setting forth of the Law; secondly, in the consecration of the tabernacle (v. 21); thirdly, in the expiation of the vessels (v. 22).

455. – In regard to the first it should be noted that the Apostle alludes here to history, which is recorded in Exodus (chap. 24) that after Moses had read God’s commandments to the people and they had answered: ‘All things that the Lord has spoken we will do, we will be obedient’ (Ex. 24:7), he took the blood which he had ordered them to save of the twelve calves, and sprinkled the book of the Law and the people, as though in confirmation of the covenant. Hence, he says, **For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people:** for it was necessary that they be read, for that reading was the promulgation of the Law: **He took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people.**

456. – Two objections arise here: one, because Exodus (chap. 24) makes no mention of a goat, but only of twelve calves; secondly, because no mention is made there of water and scarlet and hyssop. There are two answers to these two objections: one is that the Apostle had been brought up in the Law; hence, he knew what the usages were in cleansing according to the Law, namely, that the sprinkling involved the blood of goats and calves, and water mixed with hyssop, and scarlet wool as the sprinkler. Therefore, even though all are not mentioned in Exodus, the Apostle was familiar with the custom of the legal rites. Or it can be said that that was the first consecration and that it virtually contained the other sanctifications to come, among which the most important was the one which took place on the day of atonement, as described in Exodus (chap. 16) and the other about the red cow in Numbers (chap. 19). In the first of these the blood of a goat and of a calf was used; but in the second, water and purple wool and hyssop. Therefore, because that first one contained those two, the Apostle related all to it.

457. – He says, therefore: **He took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying: This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you,** i.e., God confirmed the testament: ‘Moses commanded a law in the precepts of justice’ (Sir. 24:33). For that blood was a figure of Christ’s blood, By Whom the New Testament was confirmed; therefore, Christ used the words in Matthew (26:28): This is the blood of a goat because of its likeness to sinful flesh, and of a calf because of courage. But it is mixed with water, because baptism derives its efficacy from the blood of Christ. It is sprinkled with hyssop, which cleanses

the breast, by which faith is signified: 'By faith purifying their hearts' (Ac. 15:9); and with purple wool, which is red to signify charity: 'My beloved is white and ruddy' (S of S 5:10), because the people are cleansed by faith and the love of Christ. The book of the Law is sprinkled, because the passion of Christ fulfilled the Law: 'It is consummated' (Jn. 19:30); 'I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it' (Mt. 5:17).

458. – Then when he says, **the tabernacle also and all the vessels used in worship, in the same way he sprinkled with blood**, he describes the consecration of the tabernacle. But because the tabernacle had not yet been constructed, the command to consecrate the tabernacle was not given until Exodus (chap. 25). I answer that, although the people were not sprinkled with the same blood as the tabernacle, nevertheless, the tabernacle was sprinkled with blood. Hence, it can be taken to mean that he used blood, even when he sanctified the tabernacle.

459. – But it says in Exodus (chap. 7) and Leviticus (chap. 8) that he anointed the tabernacle with oil. I answer that he is not speaking of the consecration, in which the tabernacle and its vessels were first consecrated, but of the one which occurred on the day of atonement. Or it might be better to say that even in the first one he used blood, because it says there that he anointed it with oil and later sprinkled it with blood. And these two things are necessary for sanctification, namely, the power of Christ's blood and the oil of mercy, by which the tabernacle, i.e., the Church, and the vessels, i.e., the saints, are sanctified.

460. – Then (v. 22) he continues with other cleansings in the Law. But cleansings were of two kinds: one from bodily stain, as leprosy, the other from spiritual, namely sin. The first could pertain to inanimate things, as the leprosy of houses: and the cleansing from that uncleanness was done with the blood of an immolated animal, or with the water of expiation, which was mixed with blood of a red calf. Hence, he says, **almost all things**, and not absolutely all. Or, **almost all**, so that **all** modifies **are cleansed**, i.e., 'are almost cleansed,' because they were not completely cleansed: for this was done only by a sacrament of the New Law. Or, it can modify **all things**, because not all things were cleansed with blood, for it says in Numbers (chap. 31) whatever can endure fire is purged by fire, whatever cannot, is purged by the water of expiation. But for the cleansing from the stain of sin the shedding of blood is necessary, because it was required for the sacrifice; hence he says, **without shedding of blood there is not forgiveness of sins**. This showed that the forgiveness of sin was to be accomplished by the blood of Christ. Hence, in the Old Law, sins were forgiven not by virtue of a sacrament, but by virtue of faith in Christ. Hence, it is frequently stated there: 'The priest shall pray for him and for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him' (Lev. 5:10).

Heb. 9:23-28

²³Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

461. – Having shown what is common to the Old and New Testaments, the Apostle now shows the difference between the two. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that there is a better cleansing in the New; secondly, that it is more complete (v. 25). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that both as to what is cleansed and as to that by which the cleansing is effected, there is a better cleansing in the New; secondly, he clarifies what he has said (v. 24).

462. – He says, therefore, **Thus it was necessary for the patterns of heavenly things**, namely, the tabernacle itself, which, so far as we are concerned, is a pattern, although, absolutely speaking, it is the thing exemplified and its figure, and, therefore, of less value, because the thing exemplified is superior to the figure, as the body is superior to its shadow: **to be purified with these rites**, i.e., with the sacrifices. **But the heavenly things themselves**, namely, the New Testament, **with better sacrifices than these**: better, because the others were cleansings with the blood of animals, but in the New Testament the cleansing is accomplished with the blood of Christ. Now better things are always cleansed with better things. But they were the figures of heavenly things be cleansed with better blood.

463. – But on the other hand, there is no uncleanness in heaven. I answer that according to a Gloss, by heavenly things are understood things which pertain to the state of the present Church, which are called heavenly. Furthermore, believing men bear the image of heavenly things, inasmuch as they mentally dwell in heaven. Or, in another way and better: by heavenly things is understood the heavenly home. And the Apostle is speaking here in the way that the tabernacle was said to be cleansed in the Old Testament; not that it had any uncleanness in itself, but because certain irregularities were washed away, by which they were hindered from coming to the sanctuary. And heavenly things are said to be cleansed inasmuch as a sacrament of the New Law cleanses sins, which hinder one from entering heaven.

464. – But he says, **sacrifices**, in the plural. Yet there is but one sacrifice of Christ: ‘By one oblation he has perfected forever them that are sanctified’ (Heb. 10:4). I answer that although it is one in itself, it was prefigured by several sacrifices of the Old Law. This text also shows that the sacrifices of the Old Law were good, for something is called better in relation to something good.

465. – Then (v. 24) he shows that heavenly things are cleansed by better sacrifices. For the high priest expiated the sanctuary which was made with hands, but Christ has entered into the Holies **not made with hands**, for they were not, so far as they were concerned, the patterns of the true one, but **into heaven itself**, which He expiated not in itself but in regard to us, as has been said. But He did not expiate it with fleshly sacrifices, because Christ did not come to offer such things: ‘Burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require’ (Ps. 39:8); ‘With burnt offerings you will not be delighted’ (Ps. 50:18); ‘For it is evident that the Lord sprung out of Judah; in which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priests’ (Heb. 7:14). But he entered into heaven itself: ‘And the Lord Jesus was taken up to heaven’ (Mk 16:19); ‘This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come’ (Ac. 1:11).

466. – But Why? In order **now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf**. Here the Apostle alludes to a rite of the Old Law according to which the high priest, who entered the holy of holies, stood before the mercy seat to pray for the people. Similarly, Christ entered into heaven to stand before God for our salvation. But not in the same way, because the high priest could not see the holy of holies or any face on account of the smoke ascending from the censer; but Christ appears before the face of God: not that a bodily face is there, or a cloud, but clear vision.

467. – But when Christ was on earth, could He not appear before the face of God, since God sees all things? I answer that, as Augustine speaking of God says: ‘You were with me, but I was not with You,’ namely, because God is in all things by His essence, power and presence; but the wicked are not with God through grace. Thus, Christ is said to have entered to appear before the face of God, for although He always saw Him clearly as one perfectly happy, yet the state of pilgrims, as such, does not confer this, but only the heavenly state. Therefore, when He ascended perfectly happy, He entered, body and soul, to appear in the presence of God, i.e., He entered the place where God is seen clearly; and this for us. For He entered heaven to prepare the way for us: ‘I go to prepare a place for you. But I will come again and will take you to myself’ (Jn. 14:3); ‘He shall go up that shall open the way before them’ (Mic 2:13). For the body should follow the head: ‘where the body is, there the eagles shall be gathered’ (Mt. 24:28).

468. – Then (v. 25) he shows that the cleansing effected by the New Testament is more complete than that of the Old. But he shows this in two ways: first, by the fact that the former were repeated every day, but this only once. Likewise, as to its effects, because the former could not remove sin, but this one can. In regard to this he does two things: first, he describes the first; secondly, the second (chap. 10).

But it should be noted that above, the Apostle had said three things about Christ: first, that He is a high priest; secondly, the dignity of the place He entered; thirdly, how He entered, namely, with blood. But since He has already explained these three things, he now explains how He entered, because, as the high priest entered once a year, so Christ entered only once. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows what was accomplished in the Old Testament; secondly, that it would not be fitting for the same to be accomplished in the New Testament (v. 26); thirdly, he shows what is accomplished in the New Testament (v. 28).

469. – For in the Old Testament, although the high priest could not enter lawfully but once a year, yet according to the Law he had to enter it every year with the blood of others, as it says in Leviticus (chap. 16). But Christ has not entered into the place made with hands, **nor was it to offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the holies every year with the blood of others.**

470. – Then when he says, **For then he ought to have suffered repeatedly since the foundation of the world**, he proves that it would have been unbecoming to do the same thing in the New Testament, because the greatest impropriety would follow, because since Christ entered with his blood, it would follow that He would have to have suffered frequently from the foundation of the world. For this is not the case in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, because they were offered for the sins of the children of Israel. But that people began when the Law was given; therefore, it was not fitting that it be offered from the beginning of the world. But Christ offered Himself for the sins of the whole world, because He was made the propitiation for our sins and for those of the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2). Therefore, if He were offered frequently, it would have been necessary for Him to have been born and to suffer from the beginning of the world; but this would have been most unbecoming.

471. – Then (v. 26b) he shows what is done in the New. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows why the sacrifice is not repeated in the New Testament; secondly, he explains them (v. 27).

472. – He says, therefore: **now at the end of the age, Christ has appeared**: ‘We are the ones upon whom the ends of the ages are come’ (1 Cor. 10:11). And he says this on account of the number of years, because already more than a thousand years had passed since he said this. For the ages of the world are taken according to the ages of men, which are chiefly distinguished according to the state of progress and not according to the number of years. The first age was before the deluge, in which there was no written law or punishment, as in infancy. Another was from Noah to Abraham; and so on for the ages, so that the final age is the present one, after which there is no other state of salvation, just as there is no other age after old age. But just as in the other ages of men there is a definite number of years, but not in old age, which begins at sixty, and some live for 120 years, so it has not been determined how long this state of the world will continue. Yet it is the end of the ages, because no other age remains for salvation. But Christ appeared once during that age, and He gives two reasons why He was offered only once: the first is

because in the Old Testament sins were not taken away, but this was accomplished by the offering of Christ. The second is because the high priest of the Law did not offer his own blood as Christ did. Hence, he says, **he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself**. Therefore, the former are repeated, but not this one: ‘Christ died once for our sins’ (1 Pt 3:8).

473. – Then (v. 27) he explains the two reasons: first, the second one; secondly, the first one (chap. 10). He explains the second by reason of a likeness to other men; hence, he does two things: first, he shows what has happened to other men; secondly, what happened to Christ (v. 28).

474. – In every man we find two things, namely, the need to die; secondly, that he should rise, not to be cleansed but to be judged according to his deeds. He touches on the first when he says, **and just as it is appointed for men once to die**.

475. – But on the other hand, it seems that this is not appointed, but that man brought this about by sinning, for it says in Wisdom (1:13): ‘God made not death, neither has he pleasure in the destruction of the living;’ and shortly after: ‘But the wicked with works and words have called it to them.’ I answer that there are three things to consider in death: first of all, the material cause, and in this respect it has been appointed for men once to die by reason of the condition of his nature; secondly, the gift which was bestowed, and in this respect there was given to men the gift of original justice, by which the soul contained the body, so that it would not die; thirdly, the obligation of dying, and then by sinning, man deserved to lose that gift and became subject to death. Hence, he says that the wicked called death to themselves by touching the forbidden fruit. Therefore, man is the cause of death by default, but God as the judge: ‘The wages of sin is death’ (Rom. 6:23).

476. –

477. – Then (v. 28) he shows how three things fit Christ. In regard to the first he says, and **so Christ having been offered once**, in which He agrees with the others. But He differed in two respects: first, since Christ had not descended from Adam by way of human seed, but merely as to bodily substance, He did not contract original sin; consequently, He was not obliged by that statute: ‘For in what day soever you shall eat of it, you shall die the death’ (Gen. 2:17), but He underwent death by His own will: ‘No man takes it away from me: but I lay it down of myself’ (Jn. 10:18). Therefore, he says, that he was offered: ‘He was offered because it was His own will’ (Is. 53:7); ‘Christ has died once for our sins’ (1 Pt 3:18). He differs, secondly, because our death is the effect of sin: The wages of sin is death’ (Rom. 6:23). But Christ’s death destroys sin; therefore, he says, **to bear the sins of many**, i.e., to remove them. He does not say ‘of all,’ because Christ’s death, even though it was enough for all, has no efficacy except in regard to those who are to be saved: for not all are subject to Him by faith and good works.

478. – In regard to the second he says, **he shall appear a second time not to deal with sin**. He says two things about the second coming: first, how it differs from the first, because the second will be without sin. For even though He had no sin in the first coming, He came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). In the first coming He was also made a victim for sin: ‘Him who knew no sin, he has made sin for us’ (2 Cor. 5:21). But those things are not to be found in the second coming; hence, he says that he shall appear without sin. Secondly, he states what will be peculiar to the second coming, because He will appear not to be judged, but to judge and to reward according to merits; hence, he says that he will appear. And although He will appear to all in the flesh, even to those who wounded Him, He will appear according to His divinity to the elect that eagerly wait for him by faith to save them: ‘Blessed are all they that wait for him’ (Is. 30:18); ‘We look for the Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory’ (Phil 3:20).

Heb. 10:1-18

¹For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin. ³But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. ⁴For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. ⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, ‘Lo, I have come to do your will, O God,’ as it is written of me in the roll of the book.” ⁸When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, “Lo, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” ¹⁷then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more.” ¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

479. – Having considered the things done in both testaments to show the superiority of the New Testament over the Old, the Apostle now proves something he had presupposed, namely, that the Old was not able to cleanse sins. This is the last of the five things he had prefaced about Christ. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows the failure of the Old Testament in regard to abolishing guilt; secondly, on this point he compares the priest of the New Testament with the priest of the Old Testament (v. 11). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states his intention; secondly, he proves it on the authority of Scripture (v. 5). In regard to the first he does two things: First, he sets forth what he intends; secondly, he proves (v. 2).

480. – In regard to the first it should be noted that the Apostle concludes to this failing from the condition and rite of the Old Law. But sin deprived man of future goods; hence, as though that sin pertained to future goods, i.e., heavenly, the Old Law is related to those goods as a shadow to a body, but the New

Law as an image. Now a shadow and an image agree in the fact that each represents something: but a shadow represents in general, and as to the nature of the species; an image, however, does so in particular and as to the nature of the individual, and specifically. So, too, the New Law, as far as future goods are concerned, represents more explicitly than the Old: first, because express mention and a promise of good things to come are found in the words of the New Testament, but not in the Old, which mentions only carnal goods; secondly, because the power of the New Testament consists in charity, which is the fulfillment of the Law. And although this charity is imperfect by reason of the faith in which it inheres, it is, nevertheless, similar to the charity of heaven. Hence, the New Law is called the law of love. Hence, it is called an image, because it has an expressed likeness to the goods to come. But the Old Law represented it by carnal things; hence it is called a shadow: ‘Which are a shadow of things to come’ (Col. 2:17). This therefore is the condition of the Old Testament, that it was **but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities**. Its rite consisted in offering the same sacrifice every year on the day of atonement, namely, the blood of goats and bulls, for sin, as is clear from Leviticus (chap. 25). From these two facts he draws his conclusion, namely, **the law has but a shadow of the good things to come, instead of the true form of these realities; it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered every year made perfect those who draw near**, i.e., the high priests: ‘The law brought nothing to perfection’ (Heb. 7:19). But that perfection is reserved for the New Law and consists in charity, which is the bond of perfection’ (Col. 3:14). Therefore, it says in Matthew (5:48): ‘Be you, therefore, perfect.’

481. – Then when he says, **otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered?** He proves his conclusion from two facts: first, from the rite; secondly, from the condition of the offerings (v. 4).

482. – To prove that the Law did not cleanse perfectly, he uses two facts: first, that there was frequent repetition of the same sacrifices in it. This is his reasoning: **If the worshippers had once been cleansed by the same sacrifice, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin**, so they would cease offering, because, as has been said, they offered the same sacrifices every year. Therefore, since they did not cease offering, it is a sign that they were not cleansed: ‘They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill’ (Mt. 9:12).

But on the other hand, it could be said that that reasoning is not conclusive. For one could say that that offering cleansed from past sins, but not those to come. Therefore, because they sinned often, the offerings had to be repeated frequently. I answer that the way the Apostle speaks excludes this: for since sin is something spiritual, which is opposed to what is heavenly, it was necessary that whatever cleansed from sin should be spiritual and heavenly and, consequently, that it have everlasting power; hence, above (9:12), when he spoke about the power of Christ’s sacrifice, he attributed an everlasting power to it, saying, ‘having obtained eternal redemption.’ But the fact that it has eternal power is enough for sins already committed and sins still to be committed; therefore, it was not necessary to repeat it any more. Hence ‘Christ by one oblation perfected forever them that are sanctified’ (Heb. 10:14).

But the fact that we offer the sacrifice every day seems to contradict the statement that it is not repeated. I answer that we do not offer something different from what Christ offered for us, namely, His blood; hence, it is not a distinct oblation, but a commemoration of that sacrifice which Christ offered: ‘Do this in commemoration of me’ (Lk. 22:19).

The second thing he prefaced is that in the Old Testament a commemoration was made of his own sins and those of the people every year. Therefore, they were abolished. Hence, he says, **in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year**. This is true, for mention was made of sins in general, namely, that he was conscious of sin; but special mention is made in the New: ‘Confess, therefore, your sins one to another’ (Jas. 5:16).

483. – Then when he says, **For it is impossible that the blood of oxen and goats should take away sins**, he proves the same thing by reason of the condition of the things offered. For the offering of oxen and goats, which took place on the day of atonement, was the most solemn of their offerings. And since it was an obscure and imperfect representation of heavenly things, as a shadow, it was impossible that sin be taken away by their blood. This is true, so far as their own power was concerned. But if any sins were remitted, it was due to the power of Christ’s blood: ‘Shall the holy flesh take away from you your crimes in which you have boasted?’ (Jer. 11:15). As if to say: No.

484. – Then (v. 5) he cites an authority from Scripture. In regard to this he does two things: first, he cites it; secondly, he explains it (v. 8). This authority can be divided into two parts according to a Gloss: first, it deals with Christ’s incarnation prefigured in the Law, secondly, with his passion (v. 7). Yet according to the Apostle’s intention it can be said differently that: first, he touches on what pertains to the rejection of the Old Testament; secondly, what pertains to the acceptance of the New Testament (v. 7b).

485. – This authority fits Christ, in so far as His coming into the world is concerned. He says, therefore: Because it would not remove sin, the Son of God **coming into the world said**.

But on the other hand, it says in Jn (1:10): ‘He was in the world.’ I answer that it is true that He was in the world as ruling the whole world, inasmuch as He is said to be in all things by His essence, presence and power; but He is outside the world, because He is not comprehended by the world, but has a goodness separated from the entire world, by which the goodness of the universe is caused. Yet, because He assumed a human nature for us, He is said to enter into the world, as was stated above: ‘And again when he brings in the first begotten into the world’ (Heb. 1:6).

486. – **Coming, therefore, into the world he said**. But what did He say? **Sacrifice and offering you did not desire**. But he mentions four things that were in the Old Testament: because the sacrifice was either of inanimate things, such as bread or incense, and then it was called an offering; or of animate things, and then it was offered either to placate God, and was called a holocaust, which was most fitting, because it was completely burned and gave honor to God, or it was offered for cleansing from sin, and was called a

sacrifice for sin. But this latter had two parts: for one part was burned on the altar and the other was granted to the ministers for their own use; or it was for God's benefits and was less fitting, because only one third was burned, one third given to the ministers, and one third to the ones who made the offering: and this was called a holocaust of peace. Now the offering of Christ's body in the New Testament corresponds to all of these, because God was placated by the body of Christ, i.e., in offering Himself on the cross: 'When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Rom. 5:10). Furthermore, sin was removed by it: 'Christ has died once for our sins' (1 Pt 3:18). Then by it we are introduced to eternal goods, and merit God's benefits.

487. – Hence, he says, **sacrifice and offerings you did not desire**, and then adds: **but a body you have prepared for me**, i.e., fit for immolation; and this for two reasons. First, because it was most pure, to wipe away all sin: 'It shall be a lamb without blemish' (Ex. 12:5); secondly, because it would suffer and be immolated: 'God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom 8:3). But that body is a true sacrifice and a true oblation: 'He has delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness' (Eph. 5:2). **In burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure**. It is a greater thing to please than to will, because those things please which something causes us to will; but sometimes we will certain things not for their own sake but for something else. Therefore, because holocausts were more fitting, but he says that they were not pleasing, then much less the others.

488. – But on the other hand it says in Leviticus (1:9): 'The priest shall burn them upon the altar for a holocaust and a sweet savor to the Lord.' Further, if He did not want them, why did He command them to be offered? I answer that the statement that the Lord did not want them can be understood in two ways: In one way, so that He does not want them at the time when, the truth coming, the shadow could cease; hence, a person would sin by offering them now. In another way, so that He does not want them for the sins of those who offer them: 'Your hands are full of blood' (Is. 1:15).

The third answer toward which the Apostle is tending is that they were never pleasing to God of themselves, nor were they accepted. But they are said to be accepted for two reasons: first, because they were a figure of Christ Whose passion was accepted by God, for He was not pleased with the killing of animals but in faith in His passion: 'For all things happened to them in figure' (1 Cor. 10:11). Secondly, to restrain them from idolatry by means of those sacrifices; hence, the first time the Law was given, no mention was made of sacrifices, but only after they made the golden calf. Hence Jeremiah (7:22): 'I spoke not of your fathers, and I commanded them not in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning the matter of burnt offerings and sacrifices.'

489. – Then when he says, **then said I: Lo, I come**, he continues to approve the New Testament. According to a Gloss it is read in the following way: Then, namely, when you did prepare a body for me, i.e., in the conception, I said: **Lo, I come**, i.e., I propose to come, namely, to the passion: 'This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ' (1 Jn. 5:6). Or it is better referred to His coming into the world,

thus: Then, namely, when holocausts were not pleasing to you, I said: I come by the Incarnation: ‘I came forth from the Father and am come into the world’ (Jn. 16:28), and this in order to offer myself in the passion; therefore, he says, **Lo**.

490. – But was that sacrifice accepted? It certainly was, because **in the roll [head] of the book it was written of me**. This book is Christ according to His human nature, and in it were written all the things necessary for man’s salvation: ‘Take you a great book’ (Is. 8:1); ‘And the head of Christ is God’ (1 Cor. 11:3). In the head of the book, i.e., in the plans of God, Who is the head of Christ, Who is the book, it is written that the Son of God is to be incarnated and die. Or, the book, i.e., the Psalter, whose first psalm concerns Christ. Or better, the book of life, which is nothing else than the knowledge God has about the predestination of the saints, who are saved by Christ. Therefore, **in that book it is written of me**, because the saints are predestined by me: ‘He chose us in him before the foundation of the world’ (Eph. 1:4); ‘Whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son’ (Rom. 8:29). Therefore, if predestination is called a book, it is obvious that Christ is the head of the book: ‘They that are written in the book of life of the Lamb’ (Rev. 21:27). Therefore, **in the head of the book**, i.e., in me, according to my divine nature, **it is written of me**, according to my human nature, **I have come to do your will**, i.e., this was foreordained that by Your grace I should do Your will, by offering Myself for the redemption of the human race.

491. – Then when he says, **when he said above**, he explains the authority he quoted. In regard to this he does two things: first, by assigning the order in which he shall speak, he states the difference between the Old and New Testaments; secondly, he explains in detail something presupposed by the authority (v. 10).

492. – We have said that two things were touched upon in the authority cited: one pertains to the rejection of the Old Testament; the other to the approval of the New. But the Old Testament was rejected in two ways: first, because God does not want its sacrifices; secondly, because they do not please Him. Hence, David the prophet is saying above, i.e., in the beginning. What does he say? Sacrifices and offerings and burnt for sin you desired not: ‘I desire not holocausts of rams, and fat of fatlings, and blood of calves and lambs and buck goats’ (Is. 1:11); neither are they pleasing to you (these are offered according to the law), i.e., You are not delighted with them: ‘With burnt offerings you will not be delighted’ (Ps. 50:18), unless it be because they are figures or inasmuch as they kept them from idolatry. Therefore, after saying this he continues: Then said I, namely, when You fitted to me a body for my passion, or when they did not please you, **Lo, I have come**, either to the incarnation or to the passion. To what end? To do you will, O God: ‘I came down from heaven to do the will of him that sent me’ (Jn. 6:38); ‘My meat is to do the will of him that sent me’ (Jn. 4:34). Therefore, the prophet in saying this, abolishes the first, in order to establish the second. With these words he shows the difference between the Old and New Testaments, because in speaking of the Old he says that God does not want them and that they do not please Him, i.e., of themselves; therefore, they are taken away. But when he speaks of the New he says that He wants it,

because I have come to do your will. Therefore, the New is established and confirmed as being in accord with God's will: 'The new coming on, you shall cast out the old' (Lev. 26:10).

493. – Then (v. 10) he explains what he had said about God's will, for the fulfillment of which Christ came, namely, what that will is. But this will is described in 1 Thessalonians (4:5): 'This is the will of God, your sanctification.' Hence, he says, **by that will we are sanctified**, and **this by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ**: 'He has delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God; (Eph. 5:2); once for all: 'Jesus Christ died once for our sins' (1 Pt 3:18).

494. – Then (v. 11) he compares the priest of the new and Old Testaments. Here it should be noted that there were two solemn sacrifices in the Law: one on the day of atonement offered by the high priest alone; the other was the continual sacrifice, where one lamb was offered in the morning and another in the evening (Num. 28). This is the one the Apostle intends to discuss here, and in regard to it he does three things: first, he lays down what pertains to the priest of the Old Testament; secondly, what pertains to the priest of the New (v. 12); thirdly, he supports all this with authority (v. 15).

495. – He says, therefore; **every priest stands daily at his service**. He says, **every**, to distinguish this sacrifice from the one of atonement offered by the high priest alone. But in the former, **every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices**, because they always offered a lamb: which daily sacrifices can never take away sins, because they were repeated: 'Shall the holy fleshy take away from you your crimes in which you have boasted?' (Jer. 11:15). But that continual sacrifice prefigured Christ and the eternity of Him Who is the lamb without blemish.

496. – Then (v. 12) he shows what pertains to the priesthood of Christ. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states his intent; secondly, the reason (v. 14).

497. – He says, therefore: **but when this man**, namely, Christ, **offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins**. But the Old Law offered many sacrifices without expiating for sins. This man, therefore, offered one sacrifice, because He offered Himself once for our sins, and **sat down at the right hand of God**, not as a minister always standing, as the priests of the Old Law, but as the Lord: 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand' (Ps. 109:1); 'He sits on the right hand of God' (Mk 16:19); at the right hand of God the Father with equal power in the divine nature, but with the more important goods in the human nature: 'He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high' (Heb. 1:3); and this forever, for He will not die again, because 'Christ rising from the dead, dies now no more' (Rom. 6:9); 'His power is an everlasting power' (Dan 7:14).

498. – From henceforth waiting [expecting] **until his enemies be made a stool for his feet**. This expecting does not imply any anxiety in Christ, as it does in men, because 'hope that is deferred afflicts

the soul' (Pr. 13:12), but it designates His will to have mercy: 'The Lord waits that he may have mercy only' (Is. 30:18). Therefore, those who are willing are subjected under His feet, i.e., to His humanity; and in this their salvation consists, namely, in doing His will: 'How long do you refuse to submit to me?' (Ex. 10:3). But the wicked, who are unwilling submit to it because even though they do not accomplish His will *per se*, yet it is fulfilled in their regard as a work of justice. Consequently, all things are subject in one of those ways: 'You have subjected all things under his feet' (Ps. 8:8).

499. – Then (v. 14) he gives the reason why He sits as Lord and not as a minister similar to the priests of the Old Testament, who could not take away sin by one sacrifice and, consequently, had to offer many others frequently: 'Every high priest is appointed to offer up gifts and sacrifices' (Heb. 5:1); but the sacrifice which Christ offered takes away all sins: 'Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many' (Heb. 9:28). Hence, he says that **by one offering he has perfected for all time**. This He did by reconciling us and uniting us to God as to our principle; **those who are sanctified**, because Christ's sacrifice, since He is God and man, has power to sanctify for every: 'Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate (Heb. 13:12). For by Him we are sanctified and united to God: 'By whom we have access to God' (Rom. 5:12).

500. – Then when he says, **and the Holy Spirit also bears witness to this**, he confirms what he had said by citing and authority taken from Jeremiah (31:33). Since this text has been explained above in chap. 8, we pass over it at present. Yet it can be divided into two parts: first, he cites the authority; secondly, he argues from it (v. 18).

He forms the following reason: Sins are remitted in the New Testament by Christ's sacrifice, because the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins; therefore, in the New Testament, in which sins and iniquities are forgiven, as the authority indicates, there is no offering to be repeated for sins: 'They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill' (Mt. 9:12). Therefore, where there is forgiveness of sins, there is no longer any offering for sin. For this would be to demean Christ's sacrifice.

10-2

Heb. 10:19-25

¹⁹Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; ²⁴and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

501. – After showing the many ways in which Christ's priesthood is superior to that of the Old Law, the Apostle, in keeping with his practice, comes to a conclusion and exhorts us to adhere faithfully to that priesthood. For above, after recommending something the Apostle always gave an admonition, because he took the trouble to commend Christ's grace, in order to incline them to obey Christ and desist from the ceremonies of the Law. Therefore, in regard to this he does two things: first, he gives the admonition; secondly, he gives the reason (v. 26).

In regard to the first it should be noted that he had said two things about the priesthood of Christ, namely, the power of its rite, because by his own blood, and its dignity, because he is a high priest forever. Therefore, in the admonition he recalls these two things, so that in urging faithful obedience to Christ he first mentions those two things; secondly, he gives the admonition (v. 22). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he recalls the rite of the priesthood; secondly, its dignity (v. 21).

502. – He says, therefore: **Therefore, brethren** by mutual charity, **since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary [holies] by the blood of Christ**: 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him' (Eph. 3:12); 'You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in your most firm habitation' (Ex. 15:17); 'I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord' (Ps. 121:1). And this in the blood of Christ, because 'This is the blood of the new testament' (Mt. 26:28), i.e., of the new promise about heavenly things. But he shows how we have confidence in entering, because Christ by His blood opened **a new and living way for us**: 'He shall go up that shall open the way before them' (Mic. 2:13); 'If I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself' (Jn. 14:3); 'It shall be called the holy way: the unclean shall not pass over it' (Is. 35:8). This, therefore, is the way to go to heaven. It is **new**, because before Christ no one had found it: 'No man has ascended into heaven, but he that descended from heaven' (Jn. 3:13).

Therefore, he that would ascend must inhere in Him as a member in the head: 'To him that overcomes I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is the paradise of my God' (Rev. 2:7); 'And I will write upon him

the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem' (Rev. 3:12), because they will be brought in anew. **Living**, i.e., always continuing. In this appears the power of the godhead, because it is always living.

But he shows what that way is when he says, **through the curtain [veil], that is, through his flesh**. For just as the priest entered into the holy of holies through the veil, so we, if we would enter the holy of glory, must enter through Christ's flesh, which was a veil of his divinity: 'Verily, you are a hidden God' (Is. 45:15). For faith in the godhead is not enough without faith in the incarnation: 'You believe in God, believe also in me' (Jn. 14:1). Or, **through the veil**, i.e., through His flesh given to us under the veil of the appearance of bread in the sacrament. He is not offered to us under His own form because of dread and to obtain the merit of faith.

503. – Then he commends the dignity of the priesthood when he says, **a great high priest**, who dedicated the way for us. As if to say: Having a confidence in entering in through the priest, namely, Jesus: 'You are a priest forever' (Ps. 109:4). He is called a great priest, because His priesthood is not merely over one people, as Aaron's was, but **over the house of God**, i.e., the entire Church Militant and Triumphant: 'That you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the church' (1 Tim. 3:15). He says, **over**, because 'Moses was faithful in all my house as a servant' (Num. 12:7), but Christ over the whole house as the Son, Who is the Lord of all things: 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth' (Mt. 28:18).

504. – Then (v. 22) he gives his admonition, namely, that because He is such a person and so great, He must be faithfully adhered to. This is done in three ways: by faith, by hope, and by charity: 'Now there remain faith, hope and charity' (1 Cor. 13:13). First, then, he urges them in regard to things of faith; secondly, the things of hope (v. 23); thirdly, the things of charity (v. 24).

505. – For the first there are two things required, namely, faith itself: 'Without faith it is impossible to please God' (Heb. 11:6), and the sacrament of faith. In regard to the first he says, **let us draw near to Him with a true, not feigned, heart**: 'Remember how I have walked before you in truth and with a perfect heart' (Is. 38:3). But this is accomplished when the deed agrees with the heart. Let us draw near **in full assurance of faith**: 'He that comes to God must believe' (Heb. 1:6). Nor is just any faith sufficient, but full faith is required. But this involves two things, namely, that all things proposed for our belief be believed, and that it be formed faith, which is accomplished by charity: 'Love is the fullness of the law' (Rom. 13:10).

506. – In regard to the sacrament of faith he says, **having our hearts sprinkled**, which is an allusion to Numbers (19:12), where is described the ceremony of the red cow, the water from which was sprinkled on an unclean person on the third; but on the seventh day his body and clothing were washed with other water. By the sprinkling with water of the red cow the passion of Christ was prefigured, because on the third day, i.e., by faith in the Trinity in baptism we are cleansed from our sins. In regard to this he says,

having our hearts, not our bodies, sprinkled clean: ‘You have come to the sprinkling of blood’ (Heb. 12:24). **Having our hearts sprinkled clean**, not from contact with a corpse, as by the water of the red cow, but **from an evil conscience**. Of the washing performed on the seventh day he says, **and our bodies washed with pure water**. For in baptism not only does the power of the passion work, but the gifts of the Holy Spirit are infused in us. Hence, on the seventh day, i.e., in the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit the entire man is washed inside and out from all sin, both actual and original, which is, as it were, corporeal, because the soul contracts it by uniting with tainted flesh. The Holy Spirit is called water, because He cleanses: ‘Purifying their hearts by faith’ (Ac. 15:9); ‘I will pour upon you clean water and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness, and I will cleanse you from all your idols’ (Ez. 36:25); ‘There shall be a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: for the washing of the sinner and of the unclean woman’ (Zech 13:1); ‘By the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Spirit’ (Tit 3:5). As a sign of this the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form upon Christ baptized.

507. – Then he mentions what pertains to hope. He does two things: first, he exhorts to certitude in hope; secondly, he gives the reason (v. 23).

508. – It should be noted that by faith in Christ is given to us the hope of eternal life and entrance into the kingdom: ‘He has regenerated us unto a lively hope’ (1 Pt 1:3). Hence, he says, **Let us hold fast**, not the hope, but **the confession of our hope**, because it is not enough to have hope in one’s heart, but it must be confessed with the mouth: ‘With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation’ (Rom. 10:10). Furthermore, it must be not only by word, but also by deeds; against those of whom it says in Titus (1:16): ‘They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny him.’ This confession is made by works, by which one tends to things hoped for: ‘Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown’ (Rev. 3:11). **Without wavering**, i.e., not departing from that confession in prosperity or adversity: ‘But such as turn aside into bonds, the Lord will lead out with the workers of iniquity’ (Ps. 124:5); ‘This is the way, walk in it: and go not aside neither to the right hand nor to the left’ (Is. 3:21).

509. – The reason for this is because ‘he is faithful who has promised’, and He cannot lie: ‘The Lord is faithful in all his works’ (Ps. 144:13); ‘God is faithful without any iniquity’ (Dt. 32:4).

510. – Then (v. 24) he mentions what pertains to charity. He does three things: first, he does what he said; secondly, he removes the contrary of charity (v. 25); thirdly, he assigns the reason from the fittingness of the time (v. 25b).

511. – In regard to the first it should be noted that although charity principally clings to God, it is shown by love of neighbor: ‘He that does not love his neighbor, whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see?’ (1 Jn. 4:20). Therefore, it pertains to charity to love one’s neighbor; hence, he says, **let us**

consider one another, so that we will be careful to do what pertains to our neighbor: ‘And he gave to everyone of them commandment concerning his neighbor’ (Sir. 17:12). But because some consider some things that pertain to their neighbor with the zeal of envy, and some with the zeal of hatred, against whom Proverbs (24:5) says: ‘Seek not after wickedness in the house of the just,’ he says, **to stir them to charity**, i.e., that we provoke them to charity: ‘As long as I am the apostle of the Gentiles I will honor my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to emulation them who are my flesh, and may save some of them’ (Rom. 11:13). But such provocation proceeds from love, which extends to outward works: ‘Let us now love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth’ (1 Jn. 3:18). For as Gregory says: ‘The love of God is not idle: for it does great things, if it exists, but if it refuses to work, it is not love. Therefore, the proof of love is the showing forth of the work.’ Hence, he says, the good works: ‘Being fruitful in every good work’ (Col. 1:10).

512. – Then he removes the contrary of charity when he says, **not neglecting to meet together**. For since charity is love, whose function is to unite, because, as Dionysius says, love is a uniting force: ‘That they may be one, even as we are one... and the world may know that you have loved them as you have also loved me’ (Jn. 17:22); therefore, to withdraw from one another is directly opposed to charity. Hence, he says, not neglecting to meet together in the assembly, namely, of the Church, which some forsake in three ways: first, by apostasy from the faith because of persecutions. These are signified by those of whom it is said (Jn. 6:67) that ‘they went back; and walked no more with him; ‘When there arise tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently scandalized’ (Mt. 13:21); They believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away’ (Lk. 8:13). Secondly, wicked prelates who leave the sheep in danger: ‘The hireling flees, because he is a hireling’ (Jn. 10:13). But others from pride, because, since they could be useful for ruling, they separate themselves from the others on a note of pride: ‘These are they, who separate themselves, sensual men, having not the spirit’ (Jude 1:19) as though under the pretext of higher perfection. Perhaps there were such at that time also; hence, he continues, **as is the habit of some**, against whom it says in 1 Corinthians (11:16): ‘If any man seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the church of God.’ Then he adds what they should do, saying, **but encouraging one another**; as if to say: if you observe that your companion is not behaving well, do not desert him, but console him, not as those who forsake the assembly, of whom he says, as some do.

513. – Then (v. 25b) he gives the reason for this. For someone could say: Why should we make progress in the faith? Because a natural movement, the closer it gets to its goal, the more intense it becomes, whereas the opposite is true of a forced movement. But grace inclines in the manner of nature; therefore, he says, not neglecting, as some do, but encouraging; and this **all the more as you see the day**, i.e., the end, **approaching**: ‘The night is passed, and the day is at hand’ (Rom. 13:12); ‘The path of the just, as a shining light, goes forward and increases even to perfect day’ (Pr. 4:18).

Heb. 10:26-31

²⁶For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. ²⁸A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

514. – Having commended the superiority of Christ’s priesthood and added an admonition to adhere to His priesthood by faith and charity, the Apostle now proves his admonition by reason. He does this in two ways: first, by instilling fear; secondly, by speaking gently (v. 32). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he frightens them into observing his admonition because of the removal of the remedy; secondly, because of the judgment to come (v. 27).

515. – He says, therefore: **For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin.** This is explained in two ways: in one way according to a Gloss, which seems to make a distinction between willing sinners and sinning voluntarily, so that the willing sinner is one who is led by passion to consent to sin, about which he did not think beforehand; but the one who sins voluntarily does so from certain malice, because his will is so prone to sin that he yields at once: ‘They are all turned to their own course, as a horse rushing to battle’ (Jer. 8:6), and does not repent afterwards: ‘They are glad when they have done evil’ (Pr. 2:14). Therefore, they **sin deliberately**, i.e., continue in the will to sin. And he continues exaggeratingly, **after receiving the knowledge of the truth:** ‘It is better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back’ (2 Pt 2:21), ‘there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins’, i.e., the sacrifice which Christ offered for the remission of sins does not profit them, because those who repent have their sins forgiven: ‘This is the blood of the new testament, which will be shed for you’ (Mt. 25:28), i.e., efficaciously, but of the wicked it is said: ‘I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength without cause and in vain’ (Is. 41:11); ‘The founder has melted in vain, for their wicked deeds are not consumed’ (Jer. 6:29).

516. – But it is better to say, in keeping with the Apostle’s aim, that according to Augustine, free will has many states: because in the state outside of grace, before that state is repaired by grace, it is not in our power to sin and not to sin mortally: and this, because of the preconceived end and the habit inclining. This is true for a long time, but if one acts from premeditation, he can avoid this sin or that for a while.

But after man has been repaired by grace, it is entirely within his power to avoid mortal sin and even venial sin in particular, but not altogether in general; and this is due to the help of sanctifying grace. Therefore, he says, **for if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth**, i.e., after receiving grace, by which the knowledge of sin is possessed: because before the knowledge of sin, our sin is not imputed to us. But afterwards, **there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins**, because before the reparation, which was accomplished by Christ, that sacrifice which was awaited was left, but now His death is no longer awaited; so, too, after baptism, no further baptism is awaited.

517. – Then when he says, **but a fearful prospect of judgment**, he frightens them with the expectation of God's judgment, in regard to which he does two things: first, he frightens them; secondly, he gives a reason (v. 28).

518. – Thus, therefore, it has been stated that no further sacrifice is left. What then? That which was stated above in chap. 9, namely, that after death comes the judgment: 'Know that there is a judgment' (Jb. 19:29). The expectation of that judgment is dreadful both because of the consciousness of sins: 'We all offend in many ways' (Jas. 3:2) and because of the imperfection of our justices: 'All our justices are as the rag of a menstruous woman' (Is. 64:6); 'I am afraid of your judgments' (Ps. 118:120); 'I have heard and my bowels were troubled' (Hab. 3:16). This expectation is also distressing; hence, he says, **and a fury of fire**, i.e., the punishment by fire, which is inflicted by the jealous zeal of divine justice: 'I am the Lord, you God, mighty, jealous' (Ex. 20:5). But zeal is a spouse's love. Therefore, just as a husband does not spare a wicked wife, so neither God a sinful soul: 'The jealousy and rage of the husband will not spare in the day of judgment' (Pr. 6:34). He continues, **which will consume the adversaries**: 'A fire shall go before him and shall burn his enemies round about' (Ps. 96:3), because the fire, which will go before the face of the judge, will burn the bodies of living things and will cast the reprobate into hell and consume their bodies, not by totally consuming them but by torturing them forever.

519. – Then (v. 28) he proves what he had said about the terror of the judgment: first, by arguing from the lesser; secondly, by an authority (v. 30). He takes the first from the Law. For a person deserves a greater punishment to the degree that he scorns a more sacred thing. Therefore, since the Old Testament is not as sacred as the New, but a transgressor of the Old was punished very severely, it follows that a transgressor of the New should be punished even more severely. In regard to this argument he does two things: first, he describes what was done in the Old; secondly, what will be done in the New (v. 29).

520. – In regard to the Old he mentions the punishment and the crime: the crime, when he says, **a man violating [making void] the law of Moses**. That is said to be made void which does not attain its due end. But not only the Old Law, but every law, is given to induce men to virtue and make them abstain from vices. Therefore, a person who transgresses a law and gives himself over to vices, as far as he is concerned, makes the law void: 'You have made void the commandment of God for your tradition' (Mt.

15:6); ‘The male, whose flesh of his foreskin shall not be circumcised, that soul shall be destroyed out of his people: because he has broken my covenant’ (Gen. 17:14).

521. – Then he describes the punishment, when he says, **without mercy**. This punishment is very grievous, because it inflicts death; hence, he says, **he dies**: ‘Wizards you shall not suffer to live’ (Ex. 22:18). And because there is no amnesty, he says, **without mercy**: ‘He shall die, and you shall not pity him’ (Dt. 19:12-13).

522. – But did the Law exclude God’s mercy? It seems not: ‘I desired mercy and not sacrifice’ (Has 6:6). I answer that there is a difference among mercy, clemency and pardon: for there is mercy, when a man by reason of an emotion of the heart and mind remits a punishment; but sometimes this is against justice, which forbids it. But there is pardon, when part of the debt of punishment is remitted for the public good. There is clemency, when not only part of the punishment but also part of the guilt is judged more leniently. The last two are not forbidden; but mercy described in the first way is forbidden, because it is against justice and breeds dissoluteness.

523. – **He dies**, therefore, convicted under two or three witnesses: ‘By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall stand’ (Dt. 17:6). But the reason why the Law fixes the number of witnesses is, according to Augustine, to designate the unchangeableness of the truth, which is in the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, it makes no difference if two or three persons are named, because the third is always understood in the two, namely, the Holy Spirit, Who is the nexus of the other two. That, of course, is a mystical reason. But the literal reason is because in a judgment, where one affirms and another denies, one is not to be believed more than the other; but a group must be believed. But a group is completed, when there are three; therefore, it is enough, if there are two accusers; but a third witness is added in abundance.

524. – Then (v. 19) he describes something which refers to the New Testament: first, he states the punishment; secondly, the crime (v. 29b).

525. – In regard to the punishment he says, **how much worse punishment**’do you think he deserves? For since the New Testament was preached by Christ, a person who sins under it is punished more severely: ‘But I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you’ (Mt. 11:22).

526. – But is a Christian who sins punished more than an unbeliever? If he is, it were better for all to be unbelievers. I answer that the case of those who scorn the faith is one thing, because they are scorers in the full sense; but the case of those who from ignorance do not hold to the faith not announced to them is another. For the sin of unbelief is not imputed to the latter. But those who scorn the faith announced to

them are punished more severely, because the sin of unbelief is the greatest. Therefore, if we compare a Christian with a Jew who does not scorn, and each is an adulterer, the Christian is punished more severely than the Jew, not only because he is an adulterer, but because he is more ungrateful.

527. – But is it generally true that the same specific sin is punished more severely in a greater person? I answer that there are two ways of sinning: one way is on a sudden, and so when a person dedicates himself to the things of God, if he sins all of a sudden, he is punished less: ‘The Lord who is good will show mercy to all of those who with their whole heart seek the Lord, the God of our fathers’ (2 Chr 30:18); ‘When the just man falls, he shall not be bruised’ (Ps. 36:24). But if he sins from contempt, he sins more grievously, because, since he is in a higher state, he is more scornful. It is of these that he is speaking here, because they are more ungrateful.

528. – In regard to guilt he says, **who has spurned the Son of God**. Here it should be noted that the Apostle weighs the gravity of guilt in those who sin in the New Testament from the benefits conferred on us by God in it. But God has given us something He considered most important, the precious, namely, His only begotten Son: ‘By whom he has given us most great and precious promises’ (2 Pt. 1:4). He also gave the Holy Spirit: ‘I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh’ (Jl. 2:28); ‘The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us’ (Rom. 5:5). But ingratitude after such favors aggravates the sin.

529. – In regard to the ingratitude after receiving the Son, who things must be considered and pondered, namely, the mystery of the incarnation, in which He was given to us (Is. 9), and the sacrament of the passion in which He offered Himself for us: ‘The blood of Christ who by the Holy Spirit offered himself unspotted unto God’ (Heb. 9:14). Therefore, in regard to the first he says, **who has spurned the Son of God** made incarnate for us, i.e., has belittled Him by believing that faith in the Son of God is not sufficient for salvation: ‘Before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been set forth’ (Gal. 3:1). Also not by obeying His commandments and not living according to His teaching: ‘They that despise me shall be despised’ (1 Sam. 2:30). In regard to the second he says, **and profaned the blood of the testament**, i.e., Christ’s blood which confirmed the New Testament: ‘This is my blood of the new testament’ (Mt. 26:28) and has profaned, i.e., has considered it unable to cleanse, as something unclean in itself does not cleanse: ‘What can be made clean by the unclean?’ (Sir. 34:4). As if to say: no one, namely, in the sense that only the blood of animals can cleanse. Furthermore, he has esteemed it unclean, who, after being washed by His power in baptism, sins by returning to his vomit: ‘He loved us and cleansed us from our sins in his blood’ (Rev. 1:5). Therefore, he says, **by which he was sanctified**: ‘But you are washed, but you are sanctified, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Cor. 6:11); ‘In every place there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles’ (Mal. 1:11). Again, one who sins after the other sacraments can also be said to esteem Christ’s blood unclean.

530. – Furthermore, the sin is aggravated for scorning the Holy Spirit; hence, he says, **and outraged the Spirit of grace**, by not believing that the grace of the Holy Spirit is given through Christ, as it says in John (14:16): I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete’, and that it is not sufficient for salvation without the solemnities of the Law, as though ascribing the remission of sins to the observances of the Law.

531. – Or he treads Christ under foot by receiving Him unworthily after being given freely by the Holy Spirit: ‘For it is the gift of God; not of works’ (Eph. 2:8), and he injures Christ by expelling Him by sin: ‘He shall not abide when iniquity comes in’ (Wis. 1:5); Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God’ (Eph. 4:30); ‘Extinguish not the spirit’ (1 Th. 5:19).

532. – Then (v. 30) he cites authorities to prove what he has said. In regard to this he does two things: first, he cites the authorities; secondly, he concludes from (v. 31).

533. – Therefore, he says: **We know him who has said: vengeance is mine** (Dt. 32:35), where another version has ‘Reserve vengeance for me’. But will He repay. Indeed, I will repay. But on the other hand: if vengeance is reserved to God alone, why do judges take vengeance? The Apostle answers in Romans (13:4) that a judge is God’s minister; hence, he does not judge on his own authority but God’s.

The second authority is this: **The Lord will judge his people**. If His own, then much more His enemies: ‘If a just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ (1 Pt 4:18). Or **his people**, i.e., who do not scorn his faith, because unbelievers will be condemned and not judge in the judgment of discussion. For, according to Gregory, there are four orders in the judgment: some will not be judged, but will judge and be saved, namely, the Apostles and apostolic men; others will be judged and be saved, as the moderately good; still others will be judged and be damned, as wicked believers; finally, some will not be judged, but will be damned, as all unbelievers.

534. – Then when he says, **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God**, he gives the conclusion: For since vengeance is reserved to God Who will judge His people, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. For the stronger and more just a judge is, the more he is to be feared: ‘God is a just judge, strong and patient’ (Ps. 7:12). Therefore, it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands: ‘It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord’ (Dan. 13:23); ‘If we do not penance, we shall fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men’ (Sir. 2:22).

535. – But on the other hand, David considered it better to fall into the hands of God (2 Sam. 24:17). I answer that a man sins by offending a man and by offending God. But it is better to fall into the hands of a man by offending him than into the hands of God by offending Him. Or one might say that it is better for a sinner, who is scornful, to fall into the hands of a man, but for the sinner who repents, into the hands

of God. This is the way David chose. Or it might be said that until the day of judgment it is not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God, Who judges mercifully, as long as He is the Father of mercies; but after the judgment, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God, when as the God of vengeance, He will judge our justices. For at present, as one who has experienced infirmity, out of pity He judges mercifully.

Heb. 10:32-39

³²But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴For you had compassion on the prisoners, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised. ³⁷“For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry; ³⁸but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” ³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls.

536. – After exhorting them by frightening reasons to cling to Christ by faith, hope and charity, the Apostle now gives pleasing reasons, as a good physician after cutting applies soothing lotions. For of all commendations for doing good, there is one which best stimulates a person to persevere in a good work already begun. For virtue praised acquires an immense drive, and glory is a strong stimulus. In regard to this he does two things: first, he recalls the good things they had done; secondly, he urges them to finish what still remains (v. 35). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he recalls in a general way the tribulations they suffered for the faith; secondly, he describes the kinds of tribulations (v. 33); thirdly, he explains these in detail (v. 34).

537. – Therefore, because past success stimulates a person to do better, just as bad fortune on the contrary leads to despair, he recalls their past good deeds, saying, **but recall**: ‘I have remembered you’ (Jer. 2:2), i.e., the good you accomplished; **the former days**, i.e., the first days of your conversion, when **after you were enlightened by faith**, which enlightens and cleanses the soul: ‘Purifying their hearts by faith’ (Ac. 15:9; ‘Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem’ (Is. 60:1). But this is accomplished by faith in Christ: ‘That Christ may dwell in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17); ‘To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death’ (Lk. 1:79). For the first light of the soul is faith. **You endured a hard struggle with sufferings**, i.e., struggled against the great suffering inflicted on you by those who persecuted Christ in you: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ (Ac. 9:14), me, I say, in my members, because, as Augustine says in a sermon on this text: ‘While the members were on earth, the head cried from heaven;’ ‘She gave him strong conflict, that he might overcome’ (Wis. 10:12); ‘I have fought a good fight’ (2 Tim. 4:7). For, as it is recorded in Acts (chap. 8) a great persecution arose against the Church after Stephen’s death: ‘For you, brethren, are become followers of the Churches of God which are in Judea; for you also have suffered the

same things from your own countrymen, even as they have from the Jews' (1 Th. 2:14). Therefore, if you began to endure from the beginning, it would be blameworthy to give up now.

538. – Then when he says, and on the one hand by abuse and affliction you were made a gazing stock, he shows what these afflictions were. For a person suffers in two ways: in himself by enduring affliction, and in someone else by taking pity on another's affliction. But they suffered in both ways. In regard to the first way, he says, and **on the one hand**, i.e., with respect to yourselves, you were made a gazing stock, which is very disagreeable for a wise man. For if a fool is mocked, it is not serious, even if he endures a great amount of derision from others, but to a wise man it is a burden. Furthermore, if he is troubled and mocked by his persecutor, it is very disagreeable. Therefore, he shows how great their affliction was, because they were made a gazing stock, i.e., no one took pity on them but instead rejoiced in their afflictions, i.e., in their reproaches: 'The reproaches of them that reproached you are fallen upon me' (Ps. 68:10); 'Many are the tribulations of the just' (Ps. 32:20); 'We are made a spectacle to the world,' unto derision, 'And to angels' unto congratulation, 'And to men' who use their reason 'unto imitation' (1 Cor. 4:9). In regard to the second he says, and **on the other, became partners of those who were so treated**, i.e., of those who suffered such things: and this by compassion and by administering aid: 'Communicating to the necessities of the saints' (Rom. 12:13).

539. – Then when he says, **for you had compassion on the prisoners** [them that were in bands], he explains what he had said. First to all in regard to the second, namely, how they had compassion, for among the Jews many were in bands; as it says in Acts (8:3) that Paul made havoc in the Church, committing men and women to prison: 'I was in prison and you visited me' (Mt. 25:36). In regard to the first he says, and **the plundering of your property** for helping those in bands, **you took with joy**: 'Count it all joy, when you shall fall into diverse temptations' (Jas. 1:2); 'The Apostles went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus' (Ac. 5:41).

540. – But with what joy? Should tribulations be loved? It certainly seems not, because Augustine says: 'You are commanded to bear them, not love them.' I answer that they are not loved for their own sake, but for something else: and that is the way they loved them; hence, he continues, **since you knew that you had a better and abiding possession**, namely, other riches more important, which are increased by the removal of those riches, by which they are called better. For temporal riches are hollow, because they consist in things that are beneath men; but spiritual riches consist in God, namely, in the enjoyment of God: 'Riches of salvation, wisdom and love; the fear of the Lord in his treasure' (Is. 33:6). Furthermore, they last, because the others fail of themselves and can be taken away; but these cannot: 'Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven' (Mt. 6:19).

541. – Then (v. 35) he shows what remains for them to do, i.e., to retain the confidence obtained from their good works. In regard to this he does three things: first, he gives an admonition; secondly, how to observe the admonition (v. 36); thirdly, he proves this with an authority (v. 37).

542. – He says, therefore: Inasmuch as you have done so many good things in the first days of your conversion, it should cause you to have much confidence in God; **do not, therefore, throw away your confidence**, which you will lose, if you stop doing good: **which has a great reward**: ‘Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven’ (Mt. 5:12); ‘I am your protector and your reward exceeding great’ (Gen. 15:1).

543. – The way to keep it is patience; hence, he says, **for you have need of patience**. For just as meekness moderates anger, so patience puts a limit to sadness, so that it will not exceed the bounds of reason. But sadness is sometimes caused by evils inflicted or by good deferred: ‘Hope that is deferred, afflicts the soul’ (Pr. 13:12). But it is properly called patience, when it is concerned with the first; but long-suffering, when it is concerned with the second. Here, however, patience stands for both: not only for enduring evil, but for long-suffering in the face of good things deferred. He says, therefore, that in regard to both, patience is necessary for us: ‘The patient man is better than the valiant’ (Pr. 16:32); ‘In your patience you shall possess your souls’ (Lk. 21:19); ‘Patience has a perfect work’ (Jas. 1:4).

544. – Why is it necessary? **That you may do the will of God and receive the promise**, i.e., fulfilling God’s will, which is done by obeying God’s commandments, which are the signs of God’s will. Hence, doing the signified will of God, which is the way God’s will is sometimes taken in the Scripture: ‘His ministers who do his will’ (Ps. 102:21). Thus, you will receive the promise, i.e., the things promised, which is given to those who work: ‘Call the workers and give them their hire’ (Mt. 20:8); ‘In your patience you shall possess your souls’ (Lk. 21:19); ‘He that perseveres unto the end, he shall be saved’ (Mt. 24:13); ‘I will suddenly speak against a nation and against a kingdom, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy it. If that nation against which I have spoken shall repent of their evil, I also will repent of the evil I have thought to do to them. And I will suddenly speak of a nation and of a kingdom, to build up and plant it’ (Jer. 18:7).

545. – Then (v. 37) he cites an authority to prove what he had said. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states it; secondly, he applies it to his thesis (v. 39). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he suggests how near the reward is; secondly, he describes the condition of the reward (v. 38); thirdly, he mentions the danger of losing the reward (v. 38b).

546. – In regard to the first it should be noted that this authority seems to be from Habakkuk (chap. 32); nevertheless, the first words are taken from Hag (chap. 2). But he probably did this because both were speaking about the same coming. For Habakkuk (2:3) says: ‘As yet the vision is far off,’ and Hag (2:7)

‘Yet one little while.’ Therefore, he uses the words of one as though they were the words of the other. Or better, because the Apostle is speaking of his own time, namely, after the incarnation and resurrection, from which less time remains until the judgment than remained from the time of the prophet, he prefers to use Haggai’s words at the beginning. Yet the two authorities agree in the end. Or, one could say that he is speaking as though of himself, and should be delivered no less than the prophets.

547. – But there are two comings of the Lord according to the two judgments: one is general, namely, at the end of the world in the general judgment; the other is particular, after every person’s death. But in regard to both he says, **for yet a little while**, as far as the length of time is concerned. And, of course, in regard to the first, although, i.e., is much compared to the flow of time in relation to ourselves; yet it is brief compared to eternity: ‘For a thousand years in your sight are as yesterday, which is past’ (Ps. 89:4); ‘Behold, I come quickly’ (Rev. 22:12). But as to the particular, which is at death, and concerning which Jn (14:5) says: ‘I shall come again and take you to myself,’ it does not make much difference whether it is less or more, because in the judgment each one will be as he is when he dies. Therefore, we should strive to appear good at death, because where I find you, there I will judge you. Hence, he says, **a little while**, because tribulations are not of long duration: For if they are overwhelming, they are destroyed, but if they are slight, they are not quickly ended: ‘That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation works for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory’ (2 Cor. 4:17). Therefore, **the coming one shall come quickly and will not tarry**, either in death or in the judgment: ‘Behold the judge stands before the door’ (Jas. 5:9).

548. – But he indicates the ones to be rewarded when he says, **But my righteous [just] man lives by faith**. This same text is found in Romans (1:17) and Gal (3:11). But the reward is paid only to the just: ‘The salvation of the just is from the Lord’ (Ps. 36:39). But justice is of two kinds: one in regard to human judgment: ‘not knowing the justice of God, and seeking to establish their own’ (Rom. 10:3); the other in regard to divine: ‘They were both just before the Lord’ (Lk. 1:6). But God requires the latter justice; hence, he says, **my just man**, i.e., the justice which is ordained to me, i.e., who is just to me and for me. But that by which a man is justified is faith: ‘The justice of God by faith of Jesus Christ’ (Rom. 3:22). The reason for this is that a man is just, because he is ordained to God; but that by which a man is first ordained to God is faith; therefore, he says, **My just man lives by faith**: ‘He that comes to God must believe’ (Heb. 11:6). Not only is justice by faith, but the one justified lives by faith. For just as the body lives by the soul, so the soul of God. Hence, just as the body lives by that through which the soul is first united to the body, so by that through which God is first united to the soul, the soul lives. But this is faith, because it is the first thing in the spiritual life: ‘If you will not believe, you shall not continue’ (Is. 7:9), just as a house does not remain, if the foundation is destroyed: ‘And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God’ (Gal. 2:20). But faith not formed by charity is dead; therefore, it does not give life to the soul without charity: ‘We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the

brethren' (1 Jn. 3:14). Or, **my just man lives by faith**, i.e., is considered such by me, and has the life of glory without actual suffering, if the opportunity to suffer is not given.

549. – Then when he says, **but if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him**, he shows the danger hanging over a person who does not continue in the justice of faith. For since it lies within the power of the believer to destroy himself or to save himself, he says, **but if he shrinks back**, namely, from the faith and from justice, **my soul has no pleasure in him**. Our version has Habakkuk (2:4): 'His soul shall not be right in himself.' But the sense is the same. Jerome says that wherever the Hebrew differs from the Septuagint, the Apostle uses what he learned from Gamaliel, at whose feet he learned the Law. Therefore, my soul, i.e., my will, has no pleasure in him. For the will of God should be the rule of our actions. Therefore, a person who does not agree with God's will, his soul is not right.

550. – Then when he says, **but we are not of those that shrink back and are destroyed**, he applies this to his thesis. As if to say: This is the way it will be in the case of those who withdraw from the faith; but we are not the children of withdrawing unto perdition. But a person is said to be a son of anything which rules him. Thus, a person is called the son of death, when that by which he is rejected by God, rules him: 'These are they who separate themselves, sensual men, having not the Spirit' (Jude 1:19). Unto destruction of the soul: 'You have destroyed all them that are disloyal to you' (Ps. 72:26); 'And the way of the wicked shall perish' (Ps. 1:6); **but of those who have faith**, i.e., reborn in Christ, and **save their souls**. For a person who keeps God's commandments saves his soul: 'If you will enter into life, keep the commandments' (Mt. 19:17); 'We are not of the night, or of darkness' (1 Th. 5:5). Therefore, let us not fail from the faith.

11-1

Heb. 11:1

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

551. – Above, the Apostle showed Christ's superiority in many ways by preferring Him to the angels, to Moses and to Aaron, and advised the faithful to be united to Christ. Since this union consists principally in faith and begins with faith: 'That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts' (Eph. 3:17), the Apostle proceeds to recommend this faith and does three things: first he describes faith; secondly, he gives various examples of it (v. 2); thirdly, he exhorts them to the things which pertain to faith (chap. 12).

552. – He gives a definition of faith which is complete but obscure. Hence, it should be noted that in attempting to define any virtue perfectly, one must mention its proper matter with which it deals, and its end; because habits are recognized by their acts, and acts by their objects. Therefore, it is necessary to mention the act and its order to its object and end. Thus, the definition of courage must mention its proper matter with which it deals, namely, fears and aggressions, and its end, which is the good of the republic. Now, since faith is a theological virtue, its object and end are the same, namely, God. First, he mentions its order to the end; secondly, its proper matter (v. 1b).

553. – But it should be noted that the act of faith is to believe, because it is an act of the intellect narrowed to one thing by the command of the will. Hence, to believe is to cogitate with assent, as Augustine says in *The Predestination of the Saints*. Therefore, the object of faith and of the will must coincide. But the object of faith is the first truth, in which the end of the will consists, namely, happiness. But it is present one way on earth, and another way in heaven, because on earth the first truth is not possessed and, consequently, not seen: for in regard to things that are above the soul, to possess and to see are the same, as Augustine says in *Book of 83 Questions*. Hence, they are only hoped for: 'But hope that is sees in not hope. For what a man sees, why does he hope for?' (Rom. 8:24). Therefore, the first truth, not seen but hoped for, is the end of the will on earth and, consequently, is the object of faith, because its end and object are the same. But the ultimate end of faith in heaven, which we tend toward by faith, is happiness, which consists in the clear vision of God: 'This is eternal life: to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3). But such is the hope of believers: 'He has regenerated us unto a lively hope' (1 Pt. 1:3). The end, therefore, of faith on earth is the attainment of the thing hoped for, namely, of eternal happiness; hence, he says, **of things hoped for**.

554. – But a question arises: since faith is prior to hope, why is it defined in terms of hope? For it is customary to define the later by the previous, and not vice versa. I answer that the answer should be obvious from what has been said, namely, that the object and end of faith are the same. Therefore, since

the attainment of the things hoped for is its end, it must also be its object. For it has been stated above that a habit must be defined by the order of its act to its object. But the true and the good, even though when considered in themselves are convertible as far as their supposits are concerned, differ in conception. Hence, they are diversely related to each other, because the true is a good and a good is true. In like manner, the intellect and will, which are distinguished on the basis of the distinction between the true and the good, have a diverse relationship to each other. For inasmuch as the intellect apprehends truth and anything contained in it, the true is a good; hence, the good is under the true: but inasmuch as the will moves, the true is under the good. Therefore, in the order of knowing, the intellect is prior; but in the order of moving, the will is prior. Therefore, because the intellect is moved to the act of faith by the command of the will, in the order of moving, the will is prior. Therefore, the prior is not being defined in terms of the later, because, as has been stated, in the definition of faith, the order of the act to its object, which is the same as the end, must be mentioned. But the end and the good are the same, as it says in *Phys.* II. But in the order to the good, the will, which is the subject of hope, is prior.

555. – But why not say, ‘of things to be loved,’ rather than **of things to be hoped for**? The reason is because charity is concerned with things that are present or absent. Therefore, because the unpossessed end is the object of faith, he says, **of things to be hoped for**. Nor does it make any difference that the thing to be hoped for is also the object of hope, because it is necessary that faith be ordained to an end, which coincides with the object of those virtues by which the will is made perfect; since faith pertains to the will as moved by the intellect.

556. – But since faith is one virtue, because it is called one habit (for its object is one), why not say ‘of the thing to be hoped for,’ instead **of things to be hoped for**? I answer that happiness, which is essentially one thing in itself, because it consists in the vision of God, is the principle and root from which the many good things contained under it are derived: for example, the characteristics of the body, companionship with the saints, and many other good things. Therefore, in order to show that all these pertain to faith, he speaks in the plural.

557. – The word, **substance**, which appears in the definition, can be explained in a number of ways: in one way, causally, and then it has two senses: one which is substance, i.e., making the things hoped for be present in us. This it does in two ways: in one way, by meriting, as it were; for from the fact that a person makes his intellect captive and submissive to the things of faith, he deserves some day to see the things he hopes for: for vision is the reward of faith. In another way, as though by its property, bringing it about that what is believed really to lie in the future, be somehow already possessed, provided one believe in God. In another way, we can explain the word, substance, essentially, as if faith is the substance, i.e., the essence of things to be hoped for. Hence, in Greek it is defined as ‘the hypostasis of things to be hoped for.’ For the essence of happiness is no less than the vision of God: ‘This is eternal life: that they may

know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3). Hence, in the book, *On the Trinity*.

Augustine says: 'This contemplation is promised to us; the end of all actions.' Therefore, the full vision of God is the essence of happiness. We also see this in the liberal sciences, which, if a person wishes to learn them, he must first accept its principles, which he must believe when they are delivered to him by the teacher. For a learner must believe, as it is stated in 1 *Posterior Analytics*. And in those principles the entire science is somehow contained, as conclusions are contained in their principles, and an effect in its cause. Therefore, one who has the principles of a science, say geometry, has its substance. And if geometry were the substance of happiness, a person who possessed the principles of geometry would, in a sense, have the substance of happiness. But our faith consists in believing that the blessed will see and enjoy God. Therefore, if we will to reach that state, it is necessary that we believe the principles of that knowledge. And these principles are the articles of faith, which contain the summary of this knowledge, because the vision of the triune God makes us happy. And this is one article; hence we believe this. Consequently, he says, **the assurance [substance] of things to be hoped for**: 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face' (1 Cor. 13:12). As if to say: we shall be happy when we see face to face that which we now see in a glass and in a dark manner. In these words is shown the relationship of the act of faith to its end, because faith is ordained to things to be hoped for, being, as it were, a beginning in which the whole is, as it were, virtually contained, as conclusions in principles.

558. – Then when he says, **the conviction [evidence] of things that appear not**, he touches the act of faith in regard to its proper matter. But the act proper to faith, even though it is in relation to the will, as has been said, is nevertheless in the intellect, as in a subject, because its object is the true, which properly pertains to the intellect. But there is a difference among the acts of the intellect: for some are habits of the intellect which imply complete certitude and perfect understanding of that which is understood, as is clear in the habit of understanding, which is the habit of first principles, because one who understands that every whole is great than its part sees this and is certain. But the habit of science also does this: thus the habits of understanding and of science will produce certitude and vision. But there are others which beget neither, namely, doubt and opinion. But faith is midway between these: because, as has been stated, faith produces assent in the intellect which can be caused in two ways: in one way, because the intellect is moved to assent because of the evidence of the object which is *per se* knowable, as in the habit of principles, or known through something else, which is *per se* knowable, as in the science of astronomy. In another way, it assents to something not because of the evidence of the object, by which it is not sufficiently moved (hence it is not certain), but it either doubts, namely, when there is no more evidence for one side than for the other; or it opines, if it does have reason for one side, but without satisfying the intellect, so that there is fear in regard to the opposite side. But faith does not suggest either of these absolutely: because there is no evidence, as there is in understanding and science, nor is there doubt, as in doubt and opinion; but it fixes on one side with certainty and firm adherence by a voluntary choice. But this choice rests on God's authority, and by it the intellect is fixed, so that it clings firmly to the things of

faith and assents to them with the greatest of certainty. Therefore, to believe is to know with assent. Therefore, the proper matter of the habit of faith are things that appear not. For appearance has knowledge, but not faith, as Gregory says. But the act of faith is certain adherence, which the Apostle calls evidence, taking the cause for the effect, because evidence produces faith about a doubtful matter. For evidence is the reason for believing a doubted thing. Or if we follow the etymology of the word, evidence (argument), which means arguing the mind, then he is taking the effect for the cause, because the mind is compelled to assent because of the thing's certainty. Hence, it is called the evidence of things that appear not, i.e., a sure and certain apprehension of things it does not see.

Now, if someone were to reduce those words to their correct form, he could say that faith is a habit of the mind by which eternal life is begun in us and makes the intellect assent to things that it does not see. Therefore, it is obvious that the Apostle has defined faith completely, but not clearly. [Where we have evidence another version has conviction, because on God's authority the intellect is convinced about things it does not see].

559. – By that definition, faith is distinguished from all the other habits of the intellect. For the fact that it is called evidence, faith is distinguished from opinion, doubt and suspicion, because these three do not cause the intellect to adhere to something firmly. By the words, of things to be hoped for, it is distinguished from ordinary faith which is not ordained to happiness. For by proper definition a thing is made known and distinguished from all else, as in this case; hence, all the others are reduced to it.

560. – But it seems incorrect to say, of things that appear not, as it says in Jn (20:26): 'Thomas saw and believed.' Furthermore, we believe that there is one God, a fact which is demonstrated by philosophers.

I answer that faith is taken in two senses: in the proper sense, it is concerned with things not seen and not known, as is clear from the above. But inasmuch as there cannot be greater certainty of a conclusion than of the principle from which it is drawn, because principles are always more certain than the conclusions, it follows that since the principles of faith are not evident, neither are its conclusions. Hence, the intellect does not assent to the conclusions as to things known or seen. But taken in a general sense, it excludes all knowledge that is certain; that is the sense in which it is taken by Augustine in the *Gospel Questions*, when he says that faith is concerned with things that are seen. But the Apostle is speaking in the first sense. Furthermore, it must be said of Thomas that, as Gregory says, he saw one thing and believed something else: for he saw the humanity and believed the divinity. To the objection based on demonstration, the answer is that nothing prohibits one thing being seen by one person and believed by another, as is obvious in diverse states. For what is not seen on earth is seen by the angels. Therefore, what I believe, an angel sees. Similarly, what is seen by the prophets, for example, that God is one and incorporeal, must be believed by the illiterate; just as an illiterate person believes in an eclipse which an astronomer sees. However, in such matters faith is taken in a different sense. But there are some things which absolutely transcend the state of the present life; and in regard to these there is faith in the strict sense.

11-2

Heb. 11:2-7

²For by it the men of old received divine approval. ³By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear. ⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speaking. ⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.

561. – Having given a description, the Apostle now clarifies it with an example. In regard to this he does two things: first, he manifests his thesis in general; secondly, in detail (v. 2).

562. – In regard to the first he says: Thus, therefore, I describe and command the faith, and this is nothing new: **for by this**, i.e., faith, **the men of old**, i.e., the holy fathers, **obtained divine approval**, i.e., believed, and were made ready by faith: ‘Abraham believed God and it was reputed to him unto justice’ (Gen. 15:6): ‘I have believed; therefore, have I spoken’ (Ps. 115:10). But among all the fathers of the Old Testament two especially, namely, David and Abraham, have the testimony of faith.

563. – Then (v. 3) he clarifies his thesis in detail with examples of the ancients: first, as to what they believed and taught; secondly, as to what they did (v. 4); thirdly, as to what they suffered (v. 35b).

564. – Now the doctrine of the Old Testament was twofold: one was clearly given; the other was hidden behind the veil of figures and mysteries. The first concerned the unity of God and the creation of the world; the second the mystery of the incarnation and reparation. Hence, just as they observed the Sabbath in memory of the creation, so we observe Sunday in memory of the resurrection. In regard to the doctrine of the creation of the world he says, **by faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God**. This can be read in two ways: in one way so that by the word of God is in the ablative case. Then the sense is **we**, as the ancients, **by faith**, i.e., by the doctrine of faith, namely, of the Old Testament: ‘God said: Let there be light; and the light was made’ (Gen. 1:3); ‘He spoke and they were made’ (Ps. 32:9), **understand that the world was created**, i.e., arranged, **by the word of God**, i.e., by God’s command. But it pertains to faith that we understand this, because, since faith is concerned with things unseen, even the world was made of invisible things, namely, of prime matter, which, when it is bare and devoid of all

form, is invisible and lacks all form and disposition. Hence, he says, **so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear**. In the second way, so that word is in the dative case. Then the sense is: We understand thought faith, as before, that the world was framed, i.e., suited and corresponded to the word, that from invisible things visible things might be made.

Here it should be noted that the word of God is God's very concept, by which He understands Himself and other things. But God is compared to the creature as artisan to artifact. But we notice that an artisan produces what he produces outside himself in a likeness of his concept; hence, he makes a house in matter in the likeness of the house formed in his mind. But if the external house conforms to the preconceived house, it is a work properly arranged; if not, not. But because all creatures are arranged in the best way, as produced by an artisan in Whom no error or defect can occur, they all conform in the fullest way to the divine concept according to their mode. Hence Boethius in the *Consolations* says: 'The most beautiful on bringing forth in His mind a beautiful world forms it in His likeness and image.' Therefore, he says, **we understand by faith that the world**, i.e., the entire universe of creatures, was framed, i.e., fittingly corresponded, to the word, i.e., to God's concept as artifacts correspond to their art: 'And he poured her out,' i.e., His wisdom, 'upon all his works' (Sir. 1:10).

565. – He continues, that from invisible things visible things might be made. But because the common notion among the ancients was that the soul was produced from nothing (2 *Physics*), when they saw a new work, they said that it was made from invisible things. Hence, they either supposed that everything was in everything else, as Empedocles and Anaxagoras, of whom we shall say nothing at present; or thought that forms were in hiding, as Anaxagoras. Still others supposed that they were formed from ideas, as Plato; and others from a mind, as Avicenna. Hence, according to all these philosophers, visible things were made from invisible ideal reasons. But we say, according to the aforesaid manner, that visible things were produced from invisible ideal reasons in the Word of God, by Whom all things were made. These reasons, even though they are the same reality, differ in aspect by diverse relations connoted in respect to the creature. Hence, man was created by one reason, and a horse by another reason, as Augustine says in the *Book of 83 Questions*. Thus, therefore, the world was framed by the word of God, that from invisible ideal reasons in the Word of God, visible things, i.e., every creature, might be made.

566. – But all those words are expressly against the Manicheans, who say that what a man believes is not important, but what he does. But the Apostle sets faith down as the principle of every work; hence he says that it is the substance, i.e., the foundation. Therefore, without faith, works are performed in vain. Furthermore, they say that one should believe only those things for which a reason is had. Against this he says, of things that appear not. Again, they condemn the Old Testament, saying that it was formed by an evil principle, namely, the devil. Against this he says that in this faith the ancients obtained a testimony.

567. – Then (v. 4) he shows what the ancient fathers did: first, he shows this of the fathers who lived before the deluge; secondly, of those who lived before the Law (v. 8); thirdly, of those who lived under the Law (v. 24). Before the deluge there were three especially pleasing to God, namely, Abel (Gen. 4:4), Enoch (Gen. 5:22) and Noah (Gen. 6:9). First, he mentions Abel's faith; secondly, Enoch's (v. 5); thirdly, Noah's (v. 7).

568. – In regard to Abel he shows what he did by faith and what he obtained. **By faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice;** hence, as confession witnesses to the faith within, so from his external sacrifice, his faith is commended by reason of his external worship in sacrifice. His chosen faith is shown by his offering a chosen sacrifice, for it was from the firstlings of his flock, and of their fat. For the best sacrifice was a sign of his chosen and approved faith: 'Cursed is the deceitful man that has in his flock a male, and making a vow, offers in sacrifice what is feeble to the Lord' (Mal. 1:14). No mention is made of the excellence of Cain's sacrifice, but only that he offered it from the fruits of the earth. He says that Abel **offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain**, i.e., he offered a better sacrifice than Cain to God, because it was offered for the honor of God. Otherwise, it would not have been pleasing to God. A Gloss says: By an exceeding faith, but this is not found in the Greek. Unless one were to say, by an exceeding faith, i.e., by a better and more excellent one than Cain's, because, as has been said, the external sacrifice was a sign of the faith within.

569. – But two things follow upon faith: one on this earth, namely, a witness to justice; hence, he says, **through which he received approval as righteous**, namely, by faith: 'From the blood of Abel, the just' (Mt. 23:35). Yet it is not because of Christ's testimony that he says, Abel obtained approval as righteous, because he intends to introduce the authority of the Old Testament only, but because of what is said in Genesis (4:4): 'God had respect to Abel, and to his offering,' because God has respect especially to the just: 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the just' (Ps. 33:16). And this by **God bearing witness by accepting his gifts**, which perhaps happened because his gifts were kindled by a heavenly fire. And this was God's respect. Yet He had respect first to the one offering them than to his offering, because an offering which is not sacramental is accepted because of the goodness of the one offering; for the wickedness of the minister does not alter the sacramental goodness. But in regard to the one offering, goodness is required, if the sacrifice is to benefit him. The other he obtained after death; hence, he says, **he died, but through his faith he is still speaking**, for as a Gloss says: His faith is still commended after death, because it gives us material for speaking of him. Thus, we give examples of faith and patience, when we exhort others to penance. But this is not the Apostle's aim, because all the things he uses here he takes from the Scriptures. Hence, what is said in Genesis (4:10) is understood of him: 'The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the earth;' 'Which speaks better than that of Abel' (Heb. 12:24). For he takes by it, i.e., by the merit of faith, that being dead, i.e., the blood of the dead Abel, cries to God and speaks to God.

570. – Then when he says, **by faith Enoch was taken up**, he commends Enoch: first, he states his intent; secondly, he proves it (v. 5b).

571. – The Apostle makes no mention of his works, because Scripture says little about him, but merely shows what God did to him, because by faith, i.e., by the merit of faith, he was taken up from the present life, and kept from death in another; hence, he says, **that he should not see death**: ‘He was seen no more, because God took him’ (Gen. 5:24). And it is true that he was not dead yet, but he will die some time, because the sentence, which the Lord imposed on our first parents for their sin: ‘In what day soever you shall eat of it, you shall die the death’ (Gen. 2:17), will continue on all who are born of Adam in any way, as even in the case of Christ: ‘Who is the man that shall live and not see death?’ (Ps. 88:49). But the death of two persons, namely, Enoch and Elijah, has been deferred, the reason being that the doctrine of the Old Testament is ordained to the promises of the New Testament, in which the hope of eternal life is promised to us: ‘Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand (Mt. 4:17). Therefore, after the sentence of death was pronounced, the Lord willed to lead men to a hope for life. He did this in the case of the fathers of all the states, namely, of nature, of the Law, and of grace. Hence, in the first state He offered the hope of evading death in the case of Enoch; in the Law in Elijah; in the time of grace in Christ, by Whom the effect of this promise is given to us. Therefore, the others will die. But Christ, rising from the dead, dies now no more. But the first two will be put to death by Antichrist. Thus, therefore, he was taken up that he should not see death, and not only that he should not feel death; and this in that generation.

572. – Then (v. 5b) he proves that he obtained this by the merit of faith: first, he proves that he was taken up; secondly, that he obtained this by the merit of faith (v. 5c).

573. – He proves the first on the authority of Genesis (5:24), which is presented in other words, because there it says that **he was seen no more, because God took him**, but here, he was not found, because God had taken him. But the sense is the same: ‘He pleased God and was beloved, and living among sinners he was taken up’ (Wis. 4:10). For just as it was fitting that man be expelled from paradise because of sin, so also that the just be brought into it. For by Seth he was the seventh and best descendant of Adam, as Lamech by Cain was the seventh and worst descendant of Adam, being the first who, contrary to nature, introduced bigamy.

574. – Then (v. 5b) he proves that he was taken up on account of the merit of faith, because the Scripture says of him before his being taken up that ‘he walked with God’ (Gen. 5:24), which is to consent to God and please Him. But God took him for this reason; for without faith it is impossible to walk with God and please Him, therefore, etc.

He gives the entire reason as to the premises: and first the major, because **before he was taken up he was attested as having pleased God**. Therefore, God translated him. ‘Enoch pleased God and was translated into paradise, that he may give repentance to the nations’ (Sir. 44:16). But the fact that he

pleased God is shown by the Scripture, which says that he walked with God: 'He walked with me in peace and in equity' (Mal. 2:6); 'The man that walked in the perfect way, he served me' (Ps. 100:6).

575. – He states the minor, saying: **And without faith it is impossible to please God**: 'Faith is agreeable to him' (Sir. 1:34); 'For we account a man to be justified by faith' (Rom. 3:28). He proves the minor when he says, **Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists**. But no one can please God without coming to him: 'Draw near to God and he will draw near to you' (Jas. 4:8); 'Draw nigh to him and be enlightened' (Ps. 33:5). But no one draws near to God except by faith, because faith is a light of the intellect. Therefore, no one can please God except by faith. But anyone drawing near by faith must believe the Lord. For just as we see that in every natural motion the moveable object must tend to two things in its motion that the motion not be in vain, namely, to a definite terminus and a certain cause why it is moved (but the terminus is reached before the effect of the motion is reached), so in the movement by which one draws near to God, the terminus of motion is God Himself. Hence, he says, **Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists**. He says this because of His eternity: 'He that is, sent me' (Ex. 3:14). Secondly, that he know that God exercises providence over things. For otherwise no one would go to Him, if he had not hope of a reward from Him; hence, he says, **and rewards those who seek him**: 'Behold the Lord God shall come.... And his reward is with him' (Is. 40:10). But a reward is what a man seeks for his labor: 'Call the workers and give them their hire' (Mt. 20:8). This reward is no less than God Himself, because a man should seek nothing outside of Him: 'I am your protector and your reward exceeding great' (Gen. 15:1). For God gives nothing but Himself: 'The Lord is my portion, said my soul' (Lam 3:24). He says, therefore, **and rewards those who seek him**, which is no different from Ps. 104 (v. 4): 'Seek the Lord and be strengthened: seek his face forevermore.'

576. – But are these two sufficient for salvation? I answer that after the sin of our first parents, no one can be saved from the debt of original sin except by faith in the Mediator: but that faith varies as far as the mode of believe is concerned, for different times and states. But we to whom such a great benefit has been shown must believe more explicitly than those who existed before the time of Christ. At that time some believed more explicitly, as the greater fathers and some to whom a special revelation was made. Furthermore, those under the Law believed more explicitly than those before the Law, because they were given certain sacraments by which Christ was represented as by a figure. But for the Gentiles who were saved it was enough if they believed that God is a rewarder; and this reward is received through Christ alone. Hence, they believed implicitly in a mediator.

577. – But an objection is raised against the statement that it is necessary to believe that God exists, because it was stated above that something believed is not seen or known. But God's existence is demonstrated. I answer that knowledge about God can be had in a number of ways: in one way through Christ, inasmuch as God is the Father of an only begotten and consubstantial Son, and other things which Christ specifically taught about God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit regarding the unity of

essence and trinity of persons. All this was believed, but in the Old Testament it was believed only by the greater fathers. In another way, that God alone is to be worshipped; this is the way the Jews believed. In a third way, that there is one God: and this was known even by the philosophers and does not fall under faith.

578. – Then (v. 7) he shows that Noah did by faith and what he obtained as a result: and was instituted heir of the justice which is by faith. He mentions five things that he did: first, that he believed God's words about the judgment to come, but which was not yet seen. Hence, he says, **By faith, Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen**, believed. Secondly, he was moved to fear by faith, because faith is the beginning of fear: 'The fear of God is the beginning of his love; and the beginning of faith is to be fast joined unto it' (Sir. 25:16). Hence, he says, moved by fear, namely, of the promised deluge, which, nevertheless, was not seen. Therefore, faith is concerned with invisible things. Thirdly, he fulfilled God's command by building the ark; hence, he says, he **constructed an ark**, i.e., he did what was suitable according to God's arrangement. Fourthly, he hoped for salvation from God, hence he says, **for the saving of his household**, i.e., his family, because they alone were saved: 'herein a few, that is eight souls, were saved by water' (1 Pt 3:20). Fifthly, since he did all the foregoing because of faith, **he condemned the world**, i.e., showed that worldly people deserve condemnation. But the revelation he received about constructing the ark was an answer to his desire and of the righteousness which is by faith.

579. – Then when he says, **and was instituted heir of the justice which is by faith**, he shows what he obtained by faith. For just as after someone's death another person succeeds in his inheritance, so too, because justice had not entirely died in the world, because the world still continued, but in the deluge almost the entire world perished, therefore, Noah was made heir, as it were, because of his faith. Or of the righteousness which is obtained by faith. Or, just as his fathers were justified by faith, so he was made the heir of justice by faith, namely, an imitator of his fathers' justice by faith.

11-3

Heb. 11:8-12

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. ⁹By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

580. – Having given an example of faith from the fathers who existed before the deluge, i.e., those who were the fathers of both the Gentiles and the Jews; the Apostle now treats specifically of the fathers who existed after the deluge, namely, the fathers of the Jews. First of all, he gives the example of the faith of Abraham, who was the father of believers; hence, he was the first to receive the seal of faith before the Law. First, he shows what Abraham did; secondly, what Isaac did (v. 20); thirdly, what Jacob did (v. 21); fourthly, what Joseph did (v. 22). The first is divided into two parts: in the first he shows what he did in regard to external and human knowledge; secondly, what he did in regard to God (v. 17). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows what he did in regard to his dwelling place; secondly, what he did in regard to generation (v. 11); thirdly, what he did in regard to his own conversion (v. 13). In regard to the dwelling place he does two things: first, what he did in regard to his first change of location; secondly, in regard to his other change (v. 9).

581. – In order to show how great is the authority of his example of Abraham, he mentions the renown of his name, saying, he that is called Abraham, by God: ‘You shall be called Abraham’ (Gen. 17:5). He is also called by men: ‘Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations’ (Sir. 44:20). Therefore, such a one called by God and preached by men is a worthy example. Secondly, he gives the example, saying, **by faith Abraham obeyed**. For by faith we are enabled to believe God concerning invisible things: ‘For obedience to the faith’ (Rom. 1:5); **When he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance**: ‘Go forth out of your country and from your kindred, and out of your father’s house, into the land which I shall show you’ (Gen. 12:1). But the Lord was to give him that land for an inheritance: ‘All the land which you see, I will give to you’ (Gen. 13:15).

582. – But did he not leave his own land along with his father, Thares? Therefore, he did not leave because of God’s command, but his father’s. I answer that he left with his father with the intention of returning again, but in response to the Lord’s command he went into Mesopotamia to Syria where he

intended to remain after his father's death. But in response to the Lord's command he went into the land of Canaan.

But was this so wonderful that he had to have faith about it and believe God? Yes, because **he went out, not knowing where he was to go**. But what is unknown is invisible. By Abraham's obedience we are instructed to go out from all carnal affection, if we would obtain our inheritance: 'Forget your people and your father's house' (Ps. 44:11); 'The eye has not seen, O God, besides you, what things you have prepared for them that wait for you' (Is. 64:4). Hence, that inheritance is unknown to us.

583. – Then (v. 9) he shows what he did by faith in regard to his dwelling place: first, what he did; secondly, the reason why (v. 10).

584. – For we sometimes notice a person leaving his native land and going elsewhere to make a lasting home. Not so Abraham, for he lived as a stranger in the land of Canaan and dwelt there as a stranger. This is obvious from the fact that he did not build a house there, but lived in huts and tents, which are transportable dwellings; hence, mention is always made of tents, when he speaks of Abraham. Therefore, he lived there as a stranger because of the Lord's command: 'And he gave him no inheritance in it; no, not the pace of a foot' (Ac. 7:5); 'He was a sojourner in the land of the Philistines many days' (Gen. 21:34). This is true as to what the Lord was to give him gratis, but not as to what he bought. Hence, he says, **by faith he sojourned in the land of promise**, as is clear from Genesis (12 to 21), **as in a foreign land**; which is obvious from his living in tents. That he had no intention of returning to his native land, even if he had lived longer, is shown by the fact that he lived with Isaac and Jacob not at the same time, but successively. These were the children of the promise, because the promise was made to them (Gen. 17 and 28). He says, **heirs with him of the same promise**, in which we are given to understand that we should live in the world as foreigners and strangers: 'And they that use this world, as though they used it not' (1 Cor. 7:31); 'For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is above' (Heb. 13:14).

585. – Then when he says, **he looked forward to the city which has foundations**, he shows why he lingered there as a stranger, namely, because he did not consider himself as having anything on earth, but was seeking a heavenly city as his inheritance: 'Our feet were standing on your courts, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, which is built as a city' (Ps. 121:2); 'your eyes which see Jerusalem, a rich habitation, a tabernacle that cannot be removed' (Is. 33:20). It is called a city, first of all, because of the unity of the citizens, which unity is true peace: 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise your God, O Sion' (Ps. 147:12) and in v. 14: 'Who puts peace in your borders.' Your people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacle of confidence, and in wealthy rest' (Is. 23:18); That they may be one, as we also are one' (Jn. 17:22). Secondly, it is ordered, because it exists for justice and not for doing evil. But perpetual justice is there: 'And the name of the city from that day is, the Lord is here' (Ez. 48:35). Thirdly, it was sufficient unto itself in all things that are necessary, for whatever is necessary will be there most perfectly, because

it is a state made perfect by the assemblage of all good things: ‘Jerusalem, which is built as a city, which is compact together’ (Ps. 121:3).

586. – This city has foundations, in which stability is signified: ‘A tabernacle that cannot be removed’ (Is. 33:20). But the foundations are the first part of a building; hence, the angels are the foundations of a city: ‘The foundations therefore are in the holy mountains’ (Ps. 86:20); for men will be raised to the orders of angels.

587. – The founder of this city is God, not the wisdom of human art: ‘We know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven’ (2 Cor. 5:1). Now two things are required for the erection of a city: the first is the authority of the prince, by means of whom it is made firm and who is called its founder, and from whom it takes its name, as Rome from Romulus. And so God is called the founder of that city: ‘In the city of our God: God has founded it forever’ (Ps. 47:9). The second is the way it is put together, which commends the wisdom of the artisan. And so God is called its artisan, because it was put together according to the disposition and wisdom of God: ‘Great is the Lord and exceedingly to be praised in the city of God, in his holy mountain’ (Ps. 47:2). For the proper arrangement of a work commends the workman. But divine wisdom will never be so resplendent as there; and, therefore, it is exceedingly to be praised.

588. – Then when he says, **by faith Sarah herself received power to conceive**, he shows what his wife obtained by faith. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows what she obtained; secondly, what she obtained in her children (v. 12).

589. – But there were two defects in his wife that made it seem almost impossible for her to be able to conceive: one was that she was sterile: ‘And Sarah was barren’ (Gen. 11:30). The other was that due to her age she was not naturally suited to bear children: ‘It had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women’ (Gen. 18:11). But the Apostle touches on these two defects: first, when he says, **being barren**; secondly, when he says, **even when she was past the age**. Yet in spite of all this, she received the power to conceive by faith, namely, her own or Abraham’s, because even though it was impossible according to nature that a woman of ninety conceive of a man of ninety, nevertheless, both believed God, for Whom nothing is difficult. Hence, he says, **since she considered him faithful who had promised**.

590. – But on the contrary, it seems that Abraham did not believe, because in Genesis (17:17) he asked: ‘Shall a son, think you, be born to him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bring forth?’ Again, in regard to Sarah it is stated in Genesis (18:12): ‘She laughed secretly, saying: ‘After I am old, and my lord is an old man, shall I give myself to pleasure?’ I answer that in regard to Abraham, his laughing was not due to doubt, but to wonder: ‘He staggered not by distrust; but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. Most fully knowing that whatsoever he has promised, he is

able also to perform' (Rom. 4:20). Hence, his laughter is not reproved by God, Who knows the hearts of all. But Sarah at first doubted in the first promise, but when the angel referred to the power of God, when he said: 'Is there anything hard to God?' (Gen. 18:14), she then believed; and this was, as it were, a second promise. Therefore, he says that he re-promised, because when He promised the first time, she did not believe, but only when He re-promised.

591. – But it should be noted that all the miraculous conceptions which took place in the Old Testament were as a figure of that greatest of miracles which occurred in the incarnation. For it was necessary that His birth from the Virgin be prefigured by certain things, to prepare souls to believe. But it could not be prefigured by something equal, because a figure necessarily falls short of what is prefigured. Therefore, the Scripture shows the Virgin birth by the birth from sterile women, namely, Sarah, Anna, and Elizabeth. But there is a difference: because Sarah received the power to conceive from God miraculously, but from human seed; but in the Blessed Virgin He even prepared that most pure matter from her blood, and along with that, the power of the Holy Spirit was there in place of seed. For the Word was made flesh not from human seed but by a mystical spiration.

592. – Then when he says, **for which cause there sprung even from one man**, he shows what she obtained in her children by God's power, namely, a multiplying of seed in the merit of faith, from one, namely, Abraham, they were sprung: 'I called him alone, and blessed him, and multiplied him' (Is. 51:2). Secondly, his condition should be considered, because he was **as good as dead**; for he was already an old man, as was stated above.

But on the other hand, because Sarah was dead, he begot sons by another wife, as it is stated in Genesis (25:2). Therefore, it is incorrect to describe him as good as dead. I answer that an old man can well produce from a young woman, but not from an old. Consequently, his power to produce was dead in regard to Sarah, but not in regard to others. Or, one might say that **from one** refers to Sarah's womb already as good as dead: 'Nor the dead womb of Sarah' (Rom. 4:19); 'Look upon Abraham, your father and to Sarah that bore you' (Is. 51:2).

Thirdly, the difference between those who come forth from Abraham should be considered. For, as it is stated in Romans (9:6): 'Just as some who are of the seed of Abraham are not Israelites, so not all who are of the seed of Abraham are sons; but those who are children of the promise are accounted for the seed.' Therefore, his offspring are divided into two branches, the good and the wicked. The good are signified by the stars, of whom he says that they have sprung **as the stars of heaven** in number: 'The stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced' (Bar. 3:34). But the wicked are signified by the sands of the seashore, because the wicked Jews of Abraham's seed are conformed to the Gentiles. But the sand is everywhere buffeted by the waves of the sea, and the wicked by the winds of the world: 'The wicked are like the raging sea' (Is. 57:20). But the Jews were not altogether sand, but as the sand, because they shared their wickedness with the Gentiles: 'I have set the sand a bound for the sea' (Jer. 5:22). Again,

sand is sterile and fruitless; so, too, the wicked are sterile of all work of good fruit. Hence, he says, they sprung as **the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore**. The figure is hyperbole. Or it is described as innumerable, not because it cannot be counted, but because it cannot be counted easily: ‘I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea shore’ (Gen. 22:17).

11-4

Heb. 11:13-19

¹³These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. ¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your descendants be named.” ¹⁹He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

593. – Having commended Abraham’s faith in regard to his dwelling place and offspring, The Apostle now commends him on his way of life until death. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows what he did by faith; secondly, he mentions one thing that pertains to faith (v. 14); thirdly, he shows what he received by faith (v. 16).

594. – He commends the faith of Abraham and of his children on its perseverance, because they preserved in the faith until death: ‘He that shall persevere until the end, he shall be saved’ (Mt. 24:13). Therefore, he says, **These all died in faith**, except Enoch. Or, **these all**, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And this is better, because the promise was made only to them. Furthermore, he commends them on the long delay of the promise; hence, he says, **not having received what was promised**.

595. – But on the other hand, it seems that they received the promise: ‘Abraham was one and he merited the land’ (Ez. 33:24). I answer that he possessed, i.e., was the first to receive the promise of possessing; yet he did not actually possess, as is evident from Acts (7:5). He continues, **having seen it and greeted it from afar** by faith’. As if to say: Looking on with the vision of faith. Perhaps the response in the first Sunday of Advent is taken from this passage: ‘Behold from afar off, behold I see the power of God coming, and a cloud covering the whole earth;’ ‘Behold the name of the Lord comes from afar’ (Is. 30:27). And **saluting** it, i.e., venerating. He speaks, according to Chrysostom, in the manner of sailors, who when they first see the port, break out in praise and salute the city they have reached. So the holy fathers, seeing by faith the Christ to come and the glory they were to obtain through Him, saluted, i.e., venerated Him: ‘Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. He is God and has shone upon us’ (Ps. 117:26); ‘Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see my day: he saw it and was glad’ (Jn. 8:56).

596. – He also commends their faith for its sincere confession, because, as it says in Romans (10:10): ‘With the heart we believe until justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.’ Hence, he says, **having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth**: for those three called themselves strangers and pilgrims, for in Genesis (23:4) Abraham says: ‘I am a stranger and a sojourner among you.’ Furthermore, the Lord says to Isaac: ‘Stay in the land that I shall tell you, and sojourn in it’ (Gen. 26:2), and Jacob himself says: ‘The days of my pilgrimage’ (Gen. 47:9). Now a pilgrim is one who is en route to some place. But a sojourner is one who lives in a foreign land with no intention of going anywhere else. But they not only confessed themselves sojourners, but pilgrims as well. So, too, a holy person does not make his home in the world, but is always busy and tending toward heaven: ‘I am a stranger with you, and a sojourner as all my fathers were’ (Ps. 38:13).

597. – Then (v. 14) he shows that this confession pertains to hope. For one is a guest and a stranger, unless he is outside his country and going to it. Therefore, since they confess themselves guests and strangers, they signify that they are heading toward their native land, i.e., the heavenly Jerusalem: ‘But that Jerusalem which is above is free’ (Gal. 4:26). And this is what he says, **for people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland**.

598. – But because someone might say that it is true that they were pilgrims in the land of the Philistines and Canaanites, among whom they dwelt, but they intended to return to the land they had left; he rejected this when he says, **If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had time to return**, because it was nearby. **But as it is, they desire a better country, i.e., heavenly**; hence in Genesis (24:6) ‘Abraham said to his servant: Beware you never bring back my sons again thither;’ ‘I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners’ (Ps. 83:11); ‘One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life’ (Ps. 26:4). Therefore, they were seeking a country, but not their father’s house, which they had left. In this is signified that those who go out from the world’s vanity, should not return to it mentally: ‘Forget your people and your father’s house’ (Ps. 44:11); ‘No man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God’ (Lk. 9:62); ‘forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before’ (Phil 3:13). It is also clear that these confessions of theirs by word and deed pertain to faith, because they most firmly believed until death what was promised but never shown to them. Therefore, in faith, i.e., having their faith next to them as an inseparable companion, they died: ‘Be faithful until death’ (Rev. 2:10).

599. – Then (v. 16b) he shows what they merit to receive by their faith. But this was the highest honor, when someone gets a name derived from a solemn office or from the service of a great and excellent lord or prince, as the Pope’s notary, or the king’s chancellor. But it is a greater honor, when that great lord wishes to be named after those who serve him. So it is with these three, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whose Lord, the great King over all other gods, specifically calls Himself their God; hence, (Ex.

3:6): ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob;’ hence, he says, ‘God is not ashamed to be called their God’.

600. – Three reasons can be given for this: first, because God is known by faith. But they are recorded to have first separated themselves for unbelievers by a special cult; hence, too, Abraham was the first to receive the seal of faith to become the father of many nations (Rom. 4:17). Therefore, they are proposed to us as an example, as the ones by whom God was first known, and by them God was named as an object of faith. Therefore, He willed to be named by them.

601. – Secondly, according to Augustine in a Gloss, because a mystery lies hidden in them. For in them we find a likeness to the generation by which God regenerated spiritual sons. But we observe in them a fourfold way of generating.

The first way is of free children by free women, as Abraham by Sarah begot Isaac, who begot Jacob by Rebecca, and Jacob the eight patriarchs by Leah and Rachel. The second way was of free children through bondwomen, as Jacob begot Dan and Naphtali by Bilhah and Zilpah. The third way was to servants by free women, as Isaac begot Esau by Rebecca; of him it was said, ‘The elder shall serve the younger’ (Gen. 25:23). The fourth was of servants by bondwomen, as Abraham begot Ishmael by Hagar. In this the diverse ways in which the Lord begets spiritual children is designated, because sometimes the good by the good, as Timothy by Paul; sometimes the good by the wicked, and this is the generation of free men by bondwomen; sometimes the wicked by the good, as Simon Magus by Philip, and this is the generation of servants by free women. But the generation of the wicked by the wicked is accounted in the seed; hence ‘Cast out the bondwoman and her son’ (Gal. 4:30).

602. – The third reason, which seems to be more in keeping with the Apostle’s intention, is that it is customary for a king to be called by the chief city, or from the entire country, as King of Jerusalem, King of the Romans, King of France. Therefore, the Lord is properly called the King and God of those who specifically look at that city, the heavenly Jerusalem, whose architect and founder is God. And because they showed by word and deed that they belong to that city, He is called their God; hence he says, **for he**, the founder of that city, **has prepared for them a city**.

603. – Then (v. 17) another famous example of Abraham’s faith is given, inasmuch as it regards God, namely, that supreme sacrifice of his when at the Lord’s command he willed to immolate his only begotten son (Gen. 22:1). In regard to this he does three things: first, what he did; secondly, that this pertains to faith (v. 17b); thirdly, what he received for this (v. 19b).

604. – He says, therefore: **Abraham, when he was tested**, was ready to offer Isaac by faith, as is clear from Genesis (22). But there are two questions here: first of all, to kill the innocent is against the law of nature and is, consequently, a sin, Therefore, in willing to offer him he sinned. I answer that a person who

kills at the command of a superior lawfully commanding, lawfully obeys and can lawfully carry out his duty. But God has power over life and death: 'The Lord kills and makes alive' (1 Sam 2:6). But God does no injury, when He takes the life even of the innocent. Hence, by God's decree many wicked and many innocent people die every day. Therefore, it is lawful to carry out God's commands.

There is question also about the statement, **when he was tested**. For God tests no one, since to test implies ignorance. I answer that the devil tests in order to deceive: 'Lest perhaps he that tempts should have tempted you' (1 Th. 3:5). This is clear in the temptation of Christ (Matt. 4). But a man tests in order to learn. Thus, in 1 Kg. (10:1) it is recorded that the queen of Sheba went to Solomon to try him with questions. But God does not test in that way, for He knows all things; but He tests in order that the man himself learn how strong or how weak he is: 'To afflict you and prove you, and that the things that were in your heart might be made known' (Dt. 8:2); and 2 Chr (32:31) tells of Hezekiah being tested that all things might be made known that were in his heart. Furthermore, in order that others know the one tested and take him as an example, as Abraham and Job (Sir. 44:21).

605. – Then when he says, **was ready to offer up his only son**, he shows quite subtly that that obedience pertains to faith. For, as has been stated above, Abraham in his old age believed God promising that in Isaac he would be blessed in his seed. He also believed that God could raise the dead. Therefore, when he was commanded to kill him, there was no further hope for Sarah, who was now very old, to have a child, since Isaac was already a youth. Therefore, since he believed that God's commands must be obeyed, nothing else remained but to believe that He would revive Isaac, by whom his seed would be called. Hence, he says, **his only son**, namely, of Sarah, in whom, i.e., in the only son, God was to fulfill His promise, as Genesis (18:19) indicates. Or, **the only son**, namely, among the free children: 'Take your only begotten son, Isaac' (Gen. 22:2). He who had received the promises, of whom it was said, i.e., by reason of whom; **Through Isaac shall your descendants be called, considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead**. This, therefore, was the greatest proof of his faith, because the article of the resurrection is one of the most important.

606. – Then (v. 19b) he shows what he merited by faith; because, since nothing remained but to immolate him, an angel called him, and, in place of his son, he immolated a ram sticking fast by the horns. But this was a parable, i.e., a figure of Christ to come. For the ram sticking fast by the horns among the briars is the humanity which suffered, fixed to the cross. And so it is clear that the figure was not at all equal to the one prefigured. Therefore, **he received him back**, i.e., Isaac, for a parable, i.e., for a figure of Christ to be crucified and immolated.

Heb. 11:20-26

²⁰By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²²By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his burial. ²³By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward.

607. – Above, the Apostle gave an example of Abraham's faith; here he gives the example of the faith of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph: and first of Isaac's faith.

He says, therefore, that by faith of things to come, i.e., of things that extended into the future, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. Or, he blessed them for things to come; or with a blessing which extended to the future. For his words had efficacy from God's power alone. Through this blessing the younger ruled the older. But this did not pertain to their persons, but to the two peoples that sprang from them: 'over Edom I will stretch out my shoe' (Ps. 107:10). For the Edomites who sprang from Esau were subject to the people of Israel. This signified that the younger people, i.e., the Gentiles, by faith were to supplant the older people, namely, the Jews: 'Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven' (Mt. 8:11). But that blessing which concerned the coming faith of the Gentiles was made by faith, because it looked to something in the future.

608. – Then when he says, **by faith Jacob dying blessed each of the sons**, he continues with Jacob's faith and mentions what he did in blessing the two sons of Joseph, as is recorded in Genesis (48), where it is stated that when Joseph was informed of his father's illness, he called his two sons whom Jacob blessed, crossing his hands. With this gesture he chose Ephraim over Manasseh as to dignity, because the royal dignity came from Ephraim, namely, Jeroboam. But this blessing was by faith, because it was revealed to him that it would be thus in the future. This blessing referred to the people who came out of them and not to their persons. Likewise, by faith he adored the top of his rod. This is recorded in Genesis (49), where it is stated that he made Joseph swear that he would bury him in the tomb of his fathers; and after the oath, **he adored the top of the coffin**, as our version has, or **at the top of his rod**, as the Septuagint says, or **at the top**, as is had in the Greek. And all this can stand, because he was old and carried a rod; or he took Joseph's scepter until he vowed, and after returning it he adored not the rod nor

Joseph, as some wickedly thought, but God Himself. This he did, leaning on the top of his rod. He did this, moved by the consideration of Christ's power, which Joseph's power prefigured. For being the prefect in Egypt, he carried a scepter as a sign of his power: 'You that rule them with a rod of iron' (Ps. 2:9). Or if he adored the top, the sense is the same, because he adored Christ signified by that rod, just as we adore the Crucified and the Cross by reason of Christ, Who suffered on it. Hence, properly speaking, we do not adore the Cross, but Christ crucified on it.

609. – Then (v. 22) he continues with the example of Joseph's faith and mentions two things which are stated in the last chapter of Genesis, where he said to his brothers (v. 24): 'God will visit you,' and commanded them to carry his bones out of that place. Hence, his faith bore on two things: first, because he believed that the promise He made would be fulfilled by the return of the children of Israel to the promised land; secondly, because he believed that Christ would be born and would rise from the dead in it, and many with him. Hence, he desired to have a part in that resurrection. He says, therefore, **By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites**; and this in regard to the first: **and gave commandment regarding his bones**, as to the second.

610. – But why did he not cause himself to be carried at once like his father. I answer that he was not able, because he did not then have the power he had at his father's death. Secondly, because he knew that the children of Israel were to suffer many afflictions after his death. Therefore, to assure them of their deliverance and return to the promised land, he willed his body to remain with them as a consolation. Hence, Moses took it with him, just as each tribe took the body of its father, as Jerome says.

611. – Then when he says, **By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents**, he continues with the fathers that were under the Law. For this period begins with Moses: 'Moses commanded a law in the precepts of justice' (Sir. 24:33); 'The law was given by Moses' (Jn. 1:33). But that period is divided into three parts, namely, before the departure from Egypt, during the departure, and after the departure. Therefore, he does three things: first, he shows what happened before the departure; secondly, during the departure (v. 27); thirdly, what happened in the promised land (v. 32). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows what occurred at Moses' birth; secondly, what he did (v. 24).

612. – Here he touches on the history given in Exodus (chap. 1), namely, that the Pharaoh commanded the male children to be killed, lest they be multiplied. Secondly, it is recorded that Moses' parents, seeing that he was a comely child, hid him for three months: which the Apostle attributes to their faith. For they believed that someone would be born to free them from their slavery. Hence, from the child's comeliness they believed that some power of God was in him. For they were rude country people, who sweated, working with clay and bricks: 'A man is known by his look' (Sir. 19:26). From this we see that although faith is about invisible things, yet through certain visible signs we can rest in it. 'Confirming the word

with signs that followed' (Mk 16:20). But the fact that they did this from faith and not from carnal affection is evident, because **they were not afraid of the king's edict**. Hence, they exposed themselves to danger, which they would not have done, unless they had believed that something great was in store for the child: 'Do not fear them that kill the body' (Mt. 10:28).

613. – But on the other hand, they later exposed him; therefore, it was not by faith that they preserved him. I answer that they exposed him, not to destroy him but to keep him from being stolen; hence, they placed him in a small basket, committing him to divine providence. For they believed that he would probably be killed, if he were found among them.

614. – Then (v. 24) he shows what Moses did by faith; first what he did; secondly, that what he did pertained to faith (v. 26b).

615. – Here he touches on the history recorded in Exodus (2), where it is stated that Pharaoh's daughter had him nursed by his mother and adopted him as a son. But he denied himself to be her son, not in word, but in deed; because against Pharaoh's will he killed an Egyptian who had harmed a Hebrew. Therefore, he says, **by faith, when he was grown up, he denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter**. With what feelings he did this he shows when he says, **rather choosing to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time**. This indicates his marvelous virtue. For there are two things which men desire most, namely, pleasure and delight in external things; and they flee most from their opposites, namely, pain and affliction, which are opposed to the first, and poverty and abjection, which are opposed to the second. But Moses chose those two, because he preferred pain and affliction to temporal sin's pleasure, which is always associated with sin. He also chose poverty because of Christ: 'It is better to be humbled with the meek, than to divide spoils with the proud' (Pr. 16:19); 'I have chosen to be an object in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners' (Ps. 83:11). As to the first he says, **rather choosing to be afflicted with the people of God**, whom Pharaoh afflicted, **than to have the pleasure of sin for a time**; which he would have had, if he had afflicted the children of Israel with the Egyptians. As to the second, namely, that he chose poverty, he says: **esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches**, i.e., for the faith of Christ, for which he endured a reproach from his brothers, as is stated in Exodus (2:14): 'Will you kill me, as you did yesterday kill the Egyptian?' This reproach was a figure that Christ would have to endure reproaches from the Jews: 'My heart has expected reproach and misery' (Ps. 68:21). But he esteemed those two things **greater riches than the treasures of the Egyptians**: 'The riches of salvation, wisdom and knowledge' (Is. 33:6).

616. – Then when he says, **for he looked unto the reward**, he shows that those actions of Moses pertained to faith in Christ. But it should be noted that some things are good and delightful to themselves, and other things sad and evil. But no one may prefer evil things for their own sake, but for an end, as a

sick person chooses a bitter potion, and sad things to delightful things by reason of some greater good which he can obtain by them. And so the saints, by hope of the ultimate end of eternal happiness, chose affliction and poverty over riches and pleasures, because by them they would have been hindered from attaining the end they hoped: 'Blessed are you when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you,' and he continues: 'Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven' (Mt. 5:11); 'I am your protector and your reward exceedingly great' (Gen. 15:1). Therefore, he says that he did this because he looked with the eyes of faith to the reward, which he hoped therefrom. Hence, 'faith is the substance of things to be hoped for; the evidence of things that appear not', as was stated above.

11-6

Heb. 11:27-31

²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the first-born might not touch them. ²⁹By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies.

617. – After describing Moses' faith in regard to what he did in Egypt, the Apostle now shows what he did in regard to what he did during the departure from Egypt. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows what he did during the departure from Egypt; secondly, the manner of their departure (v. 28); thirdly, what was done by faith with the unbelieving people (v. 31).

618. – He says, therefore, that **by faith Moses left Egypt**. But, as recorded in Exodus (chap. 2), he first left Egypt after killing an Egyptian; but he left it a second time, when he led all the sons of Israel out of Egypt. But a Gloss explains about the second departure, because he continues, **not fearing the anger**, i.e., the indignation, **of the king**. For at his first departure it is recorded in Exodus (chap. 2) that he feared him: 'He that is good for nothing shall feel the king's anger' (Pr. 14:35). But at the second he did not fear him: 'The just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread' (Pr. 28:1). But it can be referred to the first.

619. – But didn't he fear then? I answer that there are two things to be considered in fear: one is that it can be blameworthy, namely, when through fear a person does what should not be done, or neglects to do what should be done. This is not the way Moses feared, because fear did not cause him to neglect helping his brothers. The other can be praiseworthy, namely, when keeping the faith a person flees from danger because of a present fear: 'When they shall persecute you in one city, flee to another' (Mt. 10:23). For if a person, while preserving his honor could avoid danger and does not, he would be foolish and tempting God which is diabolical. This is the way Jesus hid from those who would stone Him, and refused the devil's suggestion to cast Himself down. So, too, Moses, trusting in God's help, fled for a time, because he feared the king.

He proves that he did this by faith, because faith is about invisible things. **And he endured**, i.e., awaited, the invisible God and his Help as seeing him: Let your heart take courage and wait for the Lord' (Ps. 26:14). For Moses awaited God's help at both departures; hence, at the first one he said: 'The God of my father is my helper' (Ex. 2:22); and at the second: 'The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace' (Ex. 14:14).

620. – Then (v. 28) he shows what he did as to the way he departed: first, he states what was done in preparing for the departure; secondly, as to the departure itself (v. 29); thirdly, as to what was done by faith in entering the promised land (v. 30).

621. – In regard to the first, he alludes to the history recorded in Exodus (12), where the Lord commanded them before the departure of the children of Israel, namely, that same night, to immolate a lamb and put its blood on both the side posts and on the upper door posts of the houses: then they were to eat the flesh roasted at the fire, and unleavened bread with wild lettuce, and to do many other things that were to be observed. And this is called the Pasch, i.e., the eating of the lamb and the shedding of blood, these two things occurring at that passage which they were to accomplish the next day. It is called the Pasch from ‘paschin’ in Greek, and ‘passic’ in Latin, or from the word ‘phrase,’ which in Hebrew is the same as ‘passage.’ But this prefigured that Christ would pass out of this world by His passion: ‘That he would pass out of this world’ (Jn. 13:1). It also instructs us that by the merit of His death we have passed from earthly things to heavenly, and from hell to heaven: ‘Come over to me, all ye that desire me’ (Sir. 24:26). This, of course, is accomplished in virtue of Christ’s blood: ‘Having, therefore, a confidence in the entering into of the holies by the blood of Christ’ (supra 10:19). But two passings occurred during that Pasch: one, in which the Lord passed, striking the Egyptians; the other in which the people passed. So, too, with the blood of Christ, Who is the lamb without blemish, the posts of the faithful should be besmeared, namely, their intellect and affections. He says, **by faith he celebrated the Pasch**, i.e., the eating of the lamb, and the shedding of the blood to be smeared upon the posts of their house.

Why did they do this? That he who destroyed the first born of the Egyptians might not touch them: ‘He killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt’ (Ps. 77:51).

622. – But by whose ministry was this done? Was it done by good angels or the wicked? For it seems to have been the wicked angels: ‘Which he sent by evil angels’ (Ps. 77:49). I answer that it could have been both. Hence, it should be noted that the infliction of punishments is sometimes performed by good angels. For as Dionysius says in *The Divine Names* (ch. 4), to punish the evil is not evil, but to do evil is evil. For punishment is a work of justice, as is shown by the angel who struck the camp of the Assyrians, because he is believed to have been a good angel (Is. 57). Hence, such punishment is visited indifferently by the good and by the bad; but by the good in a manner different from the bad, because the good does not punish save by exercising divine justice upon the evil (and in Scripture such a work of the devil or of a good angel is attributed to God). But the evil angel, even though he obeys divine justice, does not do this from a love of justice; rather from the perversity of his will he afflicts the good and the bad, and preferably the good, if he is permitted, as in the case of Job. Therefore, the angel who said to Moses (Ex. 12:23): ‘The Lord will pass through, striking the Egyptians’ was a good angel, since he sometimes speaks in his own person. But sometimes evil spirits serve a good angel; hence, he used the services of their evil and perverse wills in the slaughter. Therefore, he says: ‘Indignation and wrath and trouble, which he sent

by evil angels' (Ps. 77:49). Therefore, the evil angel did not touch those who were sealed with blood, being restrained by terror and fear of God; but the good were deterred, wondering at God's power.

623. – Then (v. 29) he shows what he did in the very passing: first, he shows this; secondly, he shows that his pertained to faith (v. 30b). He says, therefore, **by faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land**. Two things were done there by faith: one was what the men did, namely, they committed themselves to cross over; and this was done only by faith. The other was on God's part, namely, that the waters acted as a wall for them. But this was by faith, for the working of miracles is attributed to faith: 'If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence, thither, and it shall remove' (Mt. 17:19). Then he shows that this pertains to faith, because the Egyptians attempting this, i.e., willing to try it, were swallowed up, because they did not have faith: 'You stretch forth your hand, and the earth swallowed them' (Ex. 15:12).

624. – Then when he says, **By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, by the going round them seven days**, he describes what happened when they entered the promised land. This is mentioned in Jos. (6), where it is stated that at God's command the priests for seven days should go around the first city beyond the Jordan, namely, Jericho, with the ark of the covenant, and on the seventh day the walls fell down. Here was something on the part of men, namely, that at the Lord's command they went round, believing that God's command would be fulfilled, and something on God's part, namely, the walls fell down by their going round.

625. – Morally, Jericho is interpreted moon or defect, and signifies this world. Its walls are the obstacles by which some are held fast in the world. By the trumpets, which the Levites and priests sounded, the voice of preachers is signified. By the going round for seven days is designated the course of the present time, which is completed in seven days. By this we are given to understand that all the obstacles of the world fall at the continuous sound of preaching: 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels and every height that exalts itself against the knowledge of God' (2 Cor. 10:4).

626. – Then when he says, **by faith Rahab the harlot perished not with the unbelievers**, he shows what was done by faith by one of the unbelievers, namely, by Rahab, as recorded in Joshua (chaps, 2 & 6). For when Joshua had sent spies to explore Jericho, they escaped with the aid of that woman who is called a harlot, i.e., an idolater. Or she was literally a harlot, with whom they stayed, not to sin but to hide. For the houses of such persons are visible especially at night. But they had come at night. Furthermore, her house was adjacent to the wall. But harlots take everyone without exception; therefore, it was easier for them to hide with her. Therefore, she was freed by faith, hence, he says, **by faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient [unbelievers], because she had given friendly welcome to the spies**. She did not perish with the unbelievers, who perished corporally, because the spies had sworn

to free her and everyone of her father's house; which they did. But why had they turned to her? Possibly because she would be less guilty, receiving all indiscriminately. Furthermore, it was not fitting that their safety be the occasion of death for the one harboring them. But by the fact that she was freed by receiving them is designated that those who receives the preachers of the gospel are delivered from eternal death: 'He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive the reward of a prophet' (Mt. 10:11).

Heb. 11:32-35a

³²And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets-- ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵Women received their dead by resurrection.

627. – Having described the things done through faith by the fathers before and during the very entry into the promised land, the Apostle now begins to give examples of those who were in the promised land. But because there were so many, he recites their deeds in a general way and, after giving the names of the fathers, he tells why he must be brief. In regard to this he does three things: first, he gives the names of the fathers and the reason why he passes over their deeds quickly; secondly, he shows what they did by faith (v. 34); thirdly, what they received by faith (v. 33b).

628. – He says, therefore: And what more shall I say? As if to say: I have come to the time they entered the promised land, regarding which a few things remain to be said. For so many things remain to be said that they cannot be explained: For time would fail me to tell of them, i.e., if I wanted to tell of them, there would be insufficient time to do so in a letter, which should be brief. Hence, Jerome writes to Paulinus: ‘The space of an epistle does not allow me to say more.’ Or it can mean the time of life. This is the way John speaks (19.25): ‘But there are also many other signs which Jesus did; which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written.’ Where a Gloss says that he is using hyperbole. This is not false, but a figure of speech. In Ps. 39 (v. 6) where we have: ‘I have declared and I have spoken; they are multiplied above number,’ Jerome’s letter says: If I wanted to describe them, there are more than can be described.’

629. – Yet it should be noted that some of them did some good things, and some evil things. Hence, they are listed here only as to the good things they did or received. Yet it is probable that all of them finally were saints. For this reason the Apostle lists them in the catalogue of saints. First, therefore, he mentions Gideon, whose story appears in Judges (chaps. 6-8). He is mentioned first, both because he did nothing evil and because he did something very important; and probably because he received the greatest sign of the incarnation in the fleece and dew, concerning which it says in Ps. 71 (v. 6): ‘He shall come down like rain upon the fleece.’ Secondly, he mentions Barak in Judges (chaps. 4-5), who was not as famous as Gideon, to whom that victory was not credited, but to the woman. Perhaps this is why he passes him by. Thirdly, he mentions Samson Jg (chaps. 13-16), who particularly deserves not to be mentioned here, because he sinned by killing himself. But Augustine in *The City of God* excuses this, because it is

believed that he did this at God's command. The sign of this is that he could not have destroyed such a house by his own power, but by God's power, which does not cooperate with evil. Fourthly, he mentions Jephthah in Judges (chaps. 11-12), whom he lists after Samson, because he did not do the great things the latter did.

630. – But there is a question about Jephthah, whether he sinned by immolating his daughter as he vowed. For it seems not, because Judges (11:29) says: 'The spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah' and then mentions the vow and the victory. But Jerome says the contrary, namely, that he was indiscreet in vowing and guilty in paying. I answer that something from the Holy Spirit was there, namely, an impulse to vow in general that he would immolate whatever he came upon that could be immolated; but there was also something from his own spirit, namely, that he immolated what he should not. In this he sinned, but later he repented.

Similarly, Gideon sinned by making an ephod and tempting God, when he asked for a sign on the fleece. But he also repented later, as did David, whom he mentions next, saying, David and Samuel, who are discussed in the Books of Samuel, and the prophets, concerning whom time would fail me, if I wished to discuss them.

631. – But the next question is whether all the ones listed were prophets. I answer that the Holy Spirit can move to three things: namely, to know, to speak and to do; and to each of them in two ways. Sometimes He moves to know by making him understand what is seen, as in the case of Isaiah and the other prophets; hence, they are called seers: 'He that is now called a prophet, in time past was called a seer' (1 Sam 9:9); but sometimes without an understanding of what is seen, as in Pharaoh's dream and in Belshazzar's vision. He also moves one to speak in two ways: sometimes to know what he says, as David, sometimes without knowing, as Caiaphas and perhaps Balaam. Similarly, He sometimes moves one to do something and to know what he is doing, as Jeremiah, who hid his girdle by the Euphrates (Jer. 13:5); and sometimes without knowing, as Augustine *On John* says of the soldiers who divided Christ's garments among themselves without knowing the mystery to which that division was ordained. Therefore, it pertains to the notion of a prophet that he know what he sees or says or does. This is the way John says that Caiaphas prophesied, because he had something characteristic of prophecy. But the movement of the Holy Spirit is called an instinct by Augustine.

632. – Then (v. 33) he shows what the saints mentioned did: first, he shows this in general; secondly, by getting down to details (v. 33c). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions the merits of their deeds; secondly, the reward (v. 33b).

633. – In regard to the first it should be noted that of all the outward acts of the moral virtues, the acts of courage and justice seem the most important, because they pertain most to the common good. For the republic is defended against its enemies by courage, and is preserved by justice. Hence, the Apostle

commends the holy fathers on both: on courage, when he says, **by faith they conquered kingdoms**, i.e., kings, or even their kingdoms, as David and Joshua. Nevertheless, the saints spiritually overcame kingdoms, namely the kingdom of the devil, of whom Job (41:25) says: ‘He is king over all the children of pride,’ and the kingdom of the flesh: ‘Let not sin reign in your mortal body’ (Rom. 6:12); also the kingdom of the world: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ (Jn. 18:36). But they conquered by faith: ‘This is the victory which overcomes the world, our faith’ (1 Jn. 5:4). For no one can despise present things except for the sake of goods to come, because it is mainly by contempt that the world is overcome, therefore, because faith shows us the invisible things for which the world is despised, our faith overcomes the world.

634. – He comes then to the acts of justice when he says, **wrought justice**. For justice is sometimes a general virtue, namely, when it obeys the divine law: ‘The Lord is just and has loved justice’ (Ps. 10:8); ‘It is just to be subject to God’ (2 Macc 9:12); ‘He that does justice is just’ (1 Jn. 3:7). But sometimes it is a special virtue and consists in human actions and exchanges, namely, when a person renders to everyone his due. But the saints had both: ‘This is the inheritance of the servants of the Lord, and their justice with me, says the Lord’ (Is. 54:17); ‘If you desire wisdom, keep justice’ (Sir. 1:33), namely, by obeying the commandments, and also by exercising it toward the people: ‘I have done justice and judgment’ (Ps. 118:121).

635. – Then when he says, **they received**, he shows what they obtained, because **they received the promises**. For God’s promise is efficacious, because God never fails to keep His promise: ‘Whatever he has promised he is able to perform’ (Rom. 4:21); ‘The Lord is faithful in all his words’ (Ps. 144:13).

But on the contrary he says above (11:13): ‘These died according to faith, not having received the promises.’ I answer that what is said here can be understood in three ways: in one way, that God’s promise is the special one by which He promises the saints eternal life, which no one received before the coming of Christ: ‘To confirm the promises made to the fathers’ (Rom. 15:8); secondly, for the promise to inherit the promised land. This the earlier fathers, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, did not receive, but the later ones did, as Joshua and the other saints. Thirdly, for a particular promise made to individuals, as to David a kingdom and to Hezekiah health; and these are the promises they obtained.

636. – Then (v. 33b) he mentions particular benefits conferred on them: first, those which pertain to the removal of evil; secondly, to the performing of good (v. 34b). But the evils harmful to man are of two kinds: one is external and the other internal. He mentions the second when he says, **they won strength out of weakness**. But external evils are of two kinds, because they are caused either by an irrational creature or a rational. The second of these is mentioned when he says, **they escaped the edge of the sword**. From irrational sources in two ways: living or non-living. He touches on harm inflicted by

inanimate things when he says, **quenched raging fire**; by animate when he says, **they stopped the mouths of lions**.

637. – He speaks in the plural, although there was only, namely, Daniel, as it is also said in Matthew (2:20): ‘They are dead that sought the life of the child,’ for Herod was the only one who sought to kill the Child. The reason he does this is that he is speaking of all the saints generally, as of one college of saints; therefore, what one does he imputes to others and even to all, because it was done by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is common to all. Hence, even in that text he speaks as though of all. But it can also be said that this was completed in David who, as he says in 1 Sam (17:34). By the lion is spiritually understood the devil: ‘Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour’ (1 Pt 5:8). Therefore, one who represses his attacks stops the mouths of lions: ‘I broke the jaws of the wicked man; and out of his mouth I took away the prey’ (Jb. 29:17).

638. – He mentions removal of harm from inanimate things when he says, **they quenched raging fire**, as in the case of the three boys in Dan (chap. 3). Likewise, at the prayer of Moses and Aaron the fire was extinguished which had been sent by the Lord to devour the murmurers, as it says in Numbers (chap. 16). That fire is the internal impulse to concupiscence and anger. Therefore, one who restrains this impulse quenches the violence of fire: ‘Fire has fallen on them and they shall not see the sun’ (Ps. 57:9).

639. – The removal of evil from a rational creature is touched when he says, **they escaped the edge of the sword**, i.e., the attack of the enemy with sharp swords. But this happened to them very frequently, as is clear in the cases of Joshua, Gideon and David. But by the sword is understood an evil persuasion: ‘Their tongues a sharp sword’ (Ps. 56:7). One escapes those swords, when he puts an evil tongue to silenced: ‘Hedge in your ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue’ (Sir. 28:28); ‘The north wind drives away rain, as does a sad countenance a backbiting tongue’ (Pr. 25:23).

640. – Internal harm is infirmity, concerning whose removal he says, **they won strength out of weakness**, as appears particular in Hezekiah (2 Kg. 20:17). But that infirmity is sin: ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak’ (Ps. 6:3). Therefore, one who rises has recovered.

641. – Then when he says, **they became valiant**, he mentions the benefits as to the attainment of good; and he mentions three. The first pertains to the fact that acted valiantly; hence, he says, **they became valiant in battle**, as Joshua: ‘Valiant in war was Jesus, the son of Nun, who was successor of Moses’ (Sir. 46:1). The same is true of many others. The second pertains to the effect of that courage; hence, he says, **they put foreign armies to flight**, as in the cases of David and of the Maccabees: ‘If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear’ (Ps. 26:3). But the third pertains to the effect of divine courage; hence, he says, **Women received their dead raised to life again**, i.e., by the

resurrection. Some who misunderstood this, explained their dead, i.e., their husbands, and argued that death does not dissolve the bond of marriage. This is false even if they should rise again. It is also against the Apostle in Romans (7:3): 'If her husband be dead, she is delivered from the law of the husband.'

Hence, it should be noted that even in the effects of the sacraments there is a difference. For some sacraments imprint a character, as baptism, confirmation and Orders. And because a character remains in the soul forever, a baptized or confirmed or ordained person should not repeat any of those sacraments, if he rises again. But the other sacraments do not imprint a character, as penance, extreme unction, and the others. Therefore, because they cure something repeatable, they can be repeated: and among these is matrimony.

Therefore, he does not say, 'husbands,' but **their dead**, because through the resurrection mothers received their dead sons, whose resurrection was a presage of the coming resurrection begun by Christ.

642. – An account of their resurrection or rather of their revival is found in 1 Kg. (chap. 17) and 2 Kg. (chap. 4). Yet thus revived, they died again: 'But Christ rising from the dead dies now no more' (Rom. 6:0); 'Christ is risen from the dead the first fruits of them that sleep' (1 Cor. 15:20). But just as those temporal benefits were given to them as to sick persons for sustenance by the merit of their faith, so they were the figures of coming good things, which will be given to us by the merit of faith: 'And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt him: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover' (Mk 16:17). All of these Gregory explains of spiritual goods.

11-8

Heb. 11:35b - 40

^{35b} Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life.

³⁶Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated-- ³⁸of whom the world was not worthy-- wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

643. – Having given examples of the holy fathers of old who did many great things for the faith, the Apostle now gives examples of those who suffered for the faith. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows how they suffered for the faith; secondly, he shows how the promises made to them were deferred (v. 39). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions the evils inflicted on them by others; secondly, evils voluntarily assumed (v. 37b).

Evils were inflicted upon them by others in two ways, namely, sometimes during life, and sometimes in death; these he mentions when he says, **they were stoned**. During life, evils were inflicted upon them in three ways: some by bodily affliction; some by mockery; and some by imprisonment.

644. – As to the first he says, **others were racked**. As if to say: So we have said that some have received many good things because of the faith, either by having evils removed, or in the performing of temporal good. In these was prefigured the Old Testament, which conferred temporal goods. But others suffered many things for the faith: of these some were racked by horses as in 1 Maccabees (chap. 2); and in 2 Maccabees (chap. 6) the case of the two children suspended from their mothers' necks, and in 2 Maccabees (chap. 7) the case of the seven brothers. In those saints, first of all, the New Testament was prefigured; hence, he says, **refusing to accept release**. For a person subject to punishment is somehow a slave to punishment; therefore, to be delivered from punishment is called a redemption: 'He redeemed them from the hand of him that afflicted' (Ps. 77:42).

645. – But he shows why they refused release. It was not because God exercised no providence over them, but that they might obtain eternal life, which is better than release from any present punishment or any resurrection of the present life; hence, he says, **that they might rise again to a better life**: 'I will rise again on the last day' (Jb. 19:25); 'Your dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again' (Is. 26:19). Or he says, **better**, because, by the fact that they suffered greater things for Christ, they earned a greater reward:

‘Star differs from star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead’ (1 Cor. 15:41); for those with greater merit shall receive a greater reward; but the merits of martyrs are very great: ‘Greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ (Jn. 15:15). However, not every martyr is greater than every confessor, but some martyr can be greater than some confessor; and conversely, some confessor than some martyr, although not universally. For one can be compared to another as to the type of work or as to the degree of charity. But no art of itself is as meritorious as dying for Christ, because a man is giving what is most dear, namely, his own life: ‘Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justices’ sake’ (Mt. 5:10). But if considers the root of all merit, which is charity (1 Cor. 13), then a work proceeding from greater charity is more meritorious. Consequently, one simple confessor could have greater merit before God. But the Apostle is speaking of the type of work, saying, **that they might rise again to a better**, i.e., a greater and more glorious, **life**. Hence, better implies a comparison between the state of the present life and the future resurrection, or a comparison between the glory of the resurrection of one person and the glory of another.

646. – Then (v. 36) he mentions the evils inflicted on them in regard to derision by words, saying, **others suffered mocking**, as Samson in Judges (chap. 16), Tobias, Job and Isaiah: ‘I have turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me’ (Is. 50:6); and Jeremiah (20:8) says: ‘The word of the Lord is made a reproach to me, and a derision all the day.’ In regard to deeds he says, and scourging, as Micah, of whom it is written in 1 Kg. (22:24) that Zedekiah struck him on the cheek. In all of this the sufferings of the New Testament are prefigured: ‘We have been made a spectacle to the world, and to angels and to men’ (1 Cor. 4:9).

647. – Then when he says, **and even chains**, he mentions the evils inflicted on the saints by imprisonment, as Jeremiah, of whom it is written in 20 (v. 2) that he was put in the stocks. But not only chains, but **imprisonment**, as Jeremiah (chaps. 37 & 38) and Micah (1 Kg 22:27).

648. – Then he shows the evil they endured unto death when he says, **they were stoned**. This was a type of death then in vogue among all Jews: ‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them that are sent unto you’ (Mt. 23:37). Thus Naboth was stoned (1 Kg. 21:13) and Jeremiah, of whom we read that the Jews stoned him in Egypt with stones they had concealed under the brick wall of Pharaoh’s house. And although Epiphanius says that he was drawn, it was generally said that he was stoned. Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, was also stoned (2 Chr. 24:21). He mentions an unusually cruel death when he says, **they were sawn in two**. This is because of Isaiah, whom Manasseh caused to be cut with a saw. He speaks in the plural according to the custom of the Scriptures, even though there was only one case. He mentions the third type when he says, **they were tempted** to consent. He says this because of Mattathias and his sons in 1 Macc. (chap. 2) and Eleazar in 2 Maccabees (chap. 6) and the story of the

seven brothers in 2 Maccabees (chap. 7), and yet they were killed: 'It was better with them that were slain by the sword, than with those that died of hunger' (Lam. 4:9). In particular Uriah was killed by David (2 Sam. 11:15) and so was Josiah (2 Kg. 23:29).

649. – Then (v. 37b) he mentions the evils voluntarily undertaken. These are reduced to three, namely, external apparel; the state of the person; and dwelling place.

650. – In regard to external apparel he says, **they went about in skins of sheep and goats**. The former, 'melota' in Latin, is a garment made of camel hair, as some say. A goatskin, in addition to being hairy, is vile. These are said of Elijah (2 Kg 1:8), namely, that he was a hairy man with a girdle of leather about his loins. Augustine, in the book, *The Lord's Words*, says that such clothing can be worn with an evil intention, as when they are worn from vainglory; but good, if they are worn out of contempt for the world and to chastise the flesh. But especially those who profess a state of repentance should show the signs of their profession; hence, it is lawful for them to use such clothing, as the prophets did: but not for display.

651. – As to the state of the person he says, **destitute**, because they lacked riches. This prefigured the state of the New Testament, of which it says in Matthew (19:21): 'If you would be perfect, go sell what you have.' And this was especially true of Elijah, because he was fed by a raven and by a widow woman (1 Kg. 17); 'I am poor and in labors from my youth' (Ps. 87:16); 'I am needy and poor' (Ps. 69:6). **Afflicted**, as Elijah, who fled from the face of Jezebel (1 Kg. 19), and David, who fled from Absalom (2 Sam. 15); and **ill-treated** with bodily labor, as Elijah who was weary and slept under a juniper tree. He adds, **of whom the world was not worthy**. As Dionysius says in an epistle to John the Evangelist: wicked men by what they sometimes do, show the indications of their damnation; hence, he says that when wicked men separated the blessed John from them, God was showing that they were unworthy of being associated with him. Therefore, the Apostle says, **the world was not worthy of them**. As if to say: Worldly men were not worthy to associate with the just: 'I have chosen you out of the world; therefore, the world hates you' (Jn. 15:19).

652. – Then when he says, **wandering over deserts**, he shows this in regard to their place, because they had no dwelling of their own, but roamed about in deserts, in **mountains and in dens and caves of the earth**, which are places suited to contemplation and penance. It is called a den, if it is made by art; but a cave, if it is from nature or by some accident, as water corrosion. These are plain in the case of David (1 Kg. 22:1) and Elijah (1 Kg. 19:9).

653. – Then when he says, and all these being approved by the testimony of faith, received not the promise. But that no one might believe that this was due to lack of merit, he gives the reason for that delay: **Since God had foreseen something better for us**.

654. – He says, therefore: that **all these, though well attested by their faith**, i.e., by faith they have testimony that they were approved by God: ‘For not he that commends himself is approved, but he whom God commends’ (2 Cor. 10:18); ‘As gold in the furnace he has proved them’ (Wis. 3:6). And yet **they did not receive what was promised**, i.e., of glory, or the promised land, until Christ: ‘You have been angry with your anointed’ (Ps. 88:39). For they received temporal things, but not spiritual: ‘They died, not having received the promises’ (Heb. 11:13).

655. – Then when he says, **Since God has foreseen something better for us**, he shows the reason for the postponement. But some took the cause or occasion of their error from this and said that no one will enter paradise until the final consummation at the final resurrection. But this is contrary to the Apostle: ‘We know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, eternal in heaven’ (2 Cor. 5:1). Therefore, the consummation of which the Apostle speaks can refer to the essential reward, namely, to happiness, which is obtained through Christ: ‘For he shall go up that shall open the way before them’ (Mic 2:13), which the saints will not be given generally until after the general resurrection, although some perhaps already have it by a special privilege. Therefore, they are not consummated without us, but are perfected with a double stole, so that, as a Gloss says, the joy of each will become greater in the common joy of all. Hence, God provides for us in this matter. Therefore, he says, **Since God has foreseen something better for us**: ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity’ (Ps. 132:1). For man rejoices with many rejoicing: ‘If they kept the faith who waited so long, much more should we who receive right away’ (Gloss); ‘This day you shall be with me in paradise: (Lk. 23:43).

12-1

Heb. 12:1-4

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

³Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

656. – Having commended in a number of ways the faith by which the members are joined to Christ, the head, the Apostle now gives a moral admonition to keep the faith in their hearts and show it in their works, as James also urges in his epistle (c. 2). First, he teaches how they should behave in regard to evil; secondly, in regard to good (c. 13). But there are two kinds of evil, namely, of chastisement and guilt: first, therefore, he teaches how they should behave in regard to tolerating evils of chastisement; secondly, in regard to avoiding the evils of guilt (v. 12). In regard to enduring the evils of chastisement: first, he gives the examples of the ancients; secondly, the example of Christ (v. 2); thirdly, the authority of Scripture (v. 5).

657. – In regard to the first, therefore, he says: **Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.** As if to say: Thus we have said that the saints, although approved by the testimony of faith, did not obtain the promises; nevertheless, their hope did not fail. **Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,** because in word and deed God is glorified by them: ‘So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven’ (Mt. 5:16); ‘You are my witnesses, says the Lord’ (Is. 43:10). The saints are called clouds, first, on account of their sublime manner of life: ‘Who are these that fly like clouds?’ (Is. 60:8). Secondly, on account of their fecund doctrine: ‘He lifts up the drops of rain, and pours out showers like floods’ (Jb. 36:27); ‘He binds up the waters in his clouds, so that they break not out and fall down together’ (Jb. 26:8). Thirdly, on account of the usefulness of spiritual consolation, for as clouds bring refreshment, so also the examples of the saints: ‘As a cloud of dew in the day of harvest’ (Is. 18:4).

658. – We have this cloud of witnesses over our head, because the lives of the saints impose on us the need of imitating them: ‘Take, my brethren, for an example of suffering evil, of labor and of patience, the prophets’ (Jas. 5:10); ‘As the Holy Spirit speaks in the scriptures, so also in the deeds of the saints, which are for us a pattern and precept of life’ (Augustine). This, therefore, is the example of the saints which he proposes.

659. – But because men are sometimes prevented from conforming to a pattern because of some obstacle, he removes the most formidable one, which is the weight of sin. But tribulation is, as it were, a challenge: ‘Everyone that strives for the mastery, refrains himself from all things’ (1 Cor. 9:25). Therefore, everyone who desires to run to God successfully in spite of tribulation must put aside all obstacles.

660. – This the Apostle calls a **weight and sin which surrounds us**. By a weight can be understood past sin, which is called a weight, because it bends the soul down to what is below and inclines it to commit other sins: ‘As a heavy burden my iniquities are become heavy upon me’ (Ps. 37:5): ‘If a sin is not dissolved by penance, its weight soon leads to another’ (Gregory). By sin which surrounds us can be understood the occasion of sin which is present, i.e., everything that surrounds us, namely, in the world, the flesh, our neighbor and the devil. **Laying aside every weight**, i.e., past sin, which is called a weight, and sin which surrounds us, namely, the occasion of sin: ‘Laying away all malice and all guile’ (1 Pt 2:1). Or weight is earthly affection, and sin which surrounds us, carnal affection, which is caused by the flesh surrounding us. As if to say: Put aside your love of temporal and carnal things, if you want to run freely.

661. – Hence, he adds the advice, **let us run with perseverance [patience] the race that is set before us**, not only what is imposed on us to endure patiently, but we should run willingly: ‘I have run the way of your commandments’ (Ps. 118:32). But this struggle is proposed to us for justice: ‘Even unto death fight for justice’ (Sir. 4:33).

662. – Then (v. 2) he gives the example of Christ and does two things: first, he shows why Christ’s passion should be taken as an example and what should be considered in it; secondly, he shows the fruit of that consideration (v. 3).

663. – For it says in Eph (2:8): ‘By grace you are saved through faith.’ But Christ is the author of faith. Therefore, if you wish to be saved you must look to His example. Hence, he says, **Looking on Jesus** in His sufferings. This was signified by the brazen serpent lifted up as a sign, so that all who looked upon it were cured (Num. 21:8); ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in him may not perish; but may have life everlasting’ (Jn. 3:14). Therefore, if you wish to be saved, look on the face of your Christ.

664. – For He is the **author [pioneer] of faith** in two ways: first, by teaching it by word: ‘He has spoken to us by His Son’ (Heb. 1:2); ‘The only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him’ (Jn. 1:18); secondly, by impressing it on the heart: ‘Unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him’ (Phil 1:29). Likewise, He is the **finisher [perfecter] of our faith** in two ways: in one way by confirming it through miracles: ‘If you do not believe me, believe the works’ (Jn. 10:32); and by rewarding faith. For since faith is imperfect knowledge, its reward consists in perfectly

understanding it: ‘I will love him and will manifest myself to him’ (Jn. 14:21). This was signified by Zechariah (4:9) where it says: ‘The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of his house,’ namely, the Church, whose foundation is faith, ‘and his hands shall finish it.’ For the hands of Christ, Who descended from Zerubbabel, founded the Church and will finish the faith in glory: ‘We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face’ (1 Cor. 13:12); ‘Contemplation is the reward of faith, by which reward our hearts are cleansed through faith,’ as is says in Acts (15:9): ‘purifying their hearts by faith.’ (Augustine, *On the Trinity*, c. 10).

665. – For three things should be considered in the passion of Christ: first, what He despised; secondly, what He endured; thirdly, what he merited. As to the first he says, **who for the joy set before him endured the cross**. That joy was earthly joy, for which He was sought by the crowd, when they wished to make Him king; but He scorned it by fleeing into the mountain (Jn. 6:15); ‘Laughter I counter error, and to mirth I said: Why are you vainly deceived?’ (Ec 2:2). Or having set before him the joy of eternal life as a reward, he endured the cross. This is the second thing He endured, namely, the cross: ‘He humbled himself, being made obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross’ (Phil 2:8). In this is shown the bitterness of His torment, because His hands and feet were nailed to the cross; and the shame and ignominy of His death, because this was the most shameful of deaths: ‘Let us condemn him to a most shameful death’ (Wis. 2:20). In regard to the third, namely, what He merited was to sit at the right hand of the Father; hence, he says, **and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God**. For the exaltation of Christ’s humanity was the reward of His passion: ‘He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high’ (Heb. 1:3).

666. – Then (v. 3) he indicates the fruit of this consideration: first, he advises us to consider His example diligently; secondly, he shows its usefulness (v. 3b); thirdly, he gives the reason (v. 4).

667. – He says, therefore: Thus we have said: **Looking on to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith**: not only that, but also **consider**, i.e., again and again, **him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself**: ‘In all your ways think of him’ (Pr. 3:6). The reason for this is that the remedy for every tribulation is found in the cross. For obedience to God is found there: ‘He humbled himself, being made obedient’ (Phil 2:8); so is piety towards one’s parents, because He provided for His mother there; and also love of neighbor; hence, He prayed for sinners: ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do’ (Lk. 23:34); ‘Walk in love, as Christ loved you and delivered himself for you’ (Eph. 5:2); and patience in adversity: ‘I was dumb and was humbled and kept silence from good things: and my sorrow was renewed’ (Ps. 38:30); ‘He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth’ (Is. 53:7); and final perseverance in all things; hence He persevered to the end: ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit’ (Lk. 23:46). Hence, an example

of every virtue is found in the Cross: 'The Cross was not only the altar on which He suffered, but the chair from which He taught' (Augustine).

668. – Therefore, Consider him who endured. But what shall we think? Three things: the type of suffering; hence, he endured hostility, i.e., affliction in words, because they said: 'Vah, you that destroy the temple of God' (Mt. 27:40): 'You will deliver me from the contradictions of the people' (Ps. 17:44); 'All the day long I have spread my hands to a people that does not believe, and contradicts me' (Rom. 10:21); 'And for a sign that shall be contradicted' (Lk. 2:34). And such hostility, i.e., so grave and ignominious: 'O all you that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow' (Lam 1:12). Secondly, from whom he suffered, namely, from sinners, for whom He suffered: 'Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust' (1 Pt 3:18). Thirdly, the person suffering, for He suffered in His members from the beginning of the world before His passion, but then in His own person; hence, he says, against himself: 'I have made you, and I will bear' (Is. 46:4); 'I paid that which I took not away' (Ps. 68:5); 'He bore our sins in his body upon the tree' (1 Pt 2:24).

669. – He shows its usefulness, when he says, **that you may not grow weary or fainthearted**: for the consideration of Christ's passion makes us not fail: 'If Christ's passion is recalled to mind, nothing is too difficult to bear with equanimity' (Gregory). Therefore, let us not fall away from the faith, as though weary in soul: 'They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint' (Is. 40:3); 'Be not weary in well-doing' (2 Th 3:13).

670. – Then when he says, **you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood**, he gives the reason for this. As if to say: You should not grow weary in your tribulations, because you have not endured as much as Christ. For He shed His blood for us: 'This is the blood of the new covenant which shall be shed for you' (Mt. 26:28). But you have suffered the loss of your goods. Yet it is a greater work to give one's life than external possessions; although sometimes the root from which it springs, namely, charity, might be less. Hence he says, **In your struggle against sin you have not resisted to the point of shedding your blood** for Christ.

Heb. 12:5-11

⁵And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons?-- “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. ⁶For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” ⁷It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

671. – Having exhorted them to endure evil patiently, according to the example of the ancient fathers and Christ, the Apostle now exhorts them to do the same on the authority of Scripture. In regard to this he does three things: first, he gives the authority; secondly, he explains its meaning (v. 7); thirdly, he argues to his conclusion (v. 8).

672. – He cites the authority, which is found in Proverbs (3:11) but in different words from our version; for we have: ‘My son, reject not the correction of the Lord; and do not faint when you are chastised by him. For whom the Lord loves, he chastises; and as a father in the son he pleases himself.’ But because the Apostle quotes that authority for our consolation, he uses other words; hence, he says, **And have you forgotten the exhortation**. As if to say: It is strange, your comforts have given joy to my soul’ (Ps. 93:19); ‘I will never forget your justifications’ (Ps. 118:94). But he says, **exhortation** [consolation] i.e., God consoling; and he speaks emphatically: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation’ (2 Cor. 1:3). He continues, **which addresses**, i.e., the God of consolation, **you as sons**. Therefore, if he chastises, He does not hate; but His chastisement is directed to our good, because He speaks to us as to sons.

673. – But he gives the words of another saying: **My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, as some who hate discipline**; and he adds the reason, **For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves**. By this authority he forbids two things, namely hatred of discipline and impatience with it. By reason of the first he says, **My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord**, as some who hate discipline and of whom it says in Proverbs (9:8): ‘Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate you’; ‘They have hated him that rebukes in the gate; and have abhorred him that speaks perfectly’ (Am 5:10). Therefore, the Apostle says, **Do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord**. As if to say: God chastises you for

discipline; do not regard lightly [neglect], i.e., do not despise it by negligence: ‘He that rejects wisdom and discipline is unhappy’ (Wis. 3:11). By reason of the second he says, **Do not lose courage [be wearied] when you are punished by him**. For some, even though they do not hate a harsh correction, bear it impatiently; therefore, he says, **Be not wearied, while you are rebuked [punished] by him**. For a man is spiritually wearied, when he is so sad that he faints: ‘That you be not wearied, fainting in your mind’ (Heb. 12:3); ‘Be not grieved with her bonds’ (Sir. 6:26).

674. – Then when he says, **For the Lord disciplines [chastises] whom he loves**, he gives the reason. But as the Philosopher says, the word ‘chastisement’ is generally used in regard to children: for we call a person chaste, whose concupiscence has been chastised. Similarly, a child is said to be chastised, when he is well disciplined. For something prone to evil needs chastening. But concupiscence is such, and so is a child who follows his own impulses. Therefore, one who chastises does so to keep them from evil. And because our senses and thoughts are prone to evil (Gen. 6:5), the Lord chastises us to draw from evil: ‘The Lord chastising has chastised me; but he has not delivered me over to death’ (Ps. 117:18); ‘You have chastised me, and I was instructed as a young bullock unaccustomed to the yoke’ (Jer. 31:18). But He chastises not to punish but to save. Hence he says, **He scourges every son whom he receives**. Therefore, those who are not scourged are not numbered among his sons: ‘They are in the labor of men; neither shall they be scourged like other men’ (Ps. 72:5). Hence, it is a sign, as it were, of eternal reprobation: ‘My jealousy shall depart from you’ (Ez. 16:42). Nor is it strange, if He scourges every son He adopts, because He did not spare His own Son: ‘Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?’ (Lk. 24:26).

675. – Then (v. 7) he shows the meaning of the above scriptural quotation: first, he explains the meaning of the admonition; secondly, the meaning of the reason; thirdly, he shows that the reason is fitting (v. 7c).

676. – The Apostle’s advice was not to neglect the Lord’s discipline and not to become weary. But he includes both in these words, for not to neglect and not to grow weary are nothing less than to persevere in discipline; hence Job (6:10): ‘This is my consolation that afflicting me with sorrow, he spare not’; ‘Embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry’ (Ps. 2:12). He told us why we should not be negligent when he said, **Whom the Lord loves he chastises**; hence, he says here: **God is treating you as sons**. As if to say: Persevere, because he deals with you as with His sons: ‘You shall call me Father and shall not cease to walk after me’ (Jer. 3:19).

Then he shows that the reason is fitting when he says, **What son is there whom his father does not discipline [correct]**? For it is the father’s duty to correct his son: ‘He that spares the rod hates his son; but he that loves him corrects him betimes’ (Pr. 13:2); ‘A horse not broken becomes stubborn; and a child left to himself will become headstrong’ (Sir. 30:8). Therefore, correction is necessary, as a sting of the flesh was given to Paul, lest he fall (2 Cor. 12:7).

677. – Then (v. 8) he argues from what he has already said: first, he concludes to something unwelcome; secondly, by giving an example (v. 9); thirdly, he mentions the resulting usefulness (v. 11).

678. – In regard to the first he gives this reason: All the saints who have pleased God passed through many tribulations, by which they were made sons of God. Therefore, one who does not persevere in discipline is not a son but a bastard, i.e., born of adultery. From this reason he draws this conclusion: **If you are left without discipline [chastisement], in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.** ‘All who would live godly lives in Christ will suffer persecution’ (2 Tim. 3:12); ‘All that have pleased God passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful’ (Jdt. 8:23). Nor is it necessary that the saints always have outward tribulations, when they are afflicted inwardly by the wicked lives of perverse men: ‘Lot dwelling among them that vexed the just soul from day to day with unjust works’ (2 Pt 2:8). But a son, properly speaking, is born of a legitimate father; our mother is the Church, whose spouse is God Himself: ‘I will espouse you to me in faith’ (Hos 2:20). Therefore, those born of the spirit of the world or the devil are bastards: ‘But draw near hither, you sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and of the harlot’ (Is. 57:3). Therefore, it is clear that they are not truly sons, unless they are born of a legitimate father.

679. – Then (v. 9) he gives the second reason drawn from our own experience, namely, paternal correction. This proceeds according to the twofold difference between God the Father and the father of our flesh. The first difference is that a man begets a man as to the body, but not as to the soul, which is created and not transmitted: ‘I have not given you a spirit and a soul’ (2 Macc 7:22); hence, he says, **We have had earthly fathers to discipline us:** ‘Have you children? Instruct them’ (Sir. 7:25). **And we respected them:** ‘Honor your father and your mother’ (Ex. 20:12). But God is our Father in a more excellent way, namely, as to the soul, which He creates: ‘The spirit will return to God who gave it’ (Ec 12:7). Furthermore, He makes the soul just by adopting us as sons: ‘The Spirit gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God’ (Rom. 8:16). Hence, he says, **shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits,** i.e., our souls, which are called spirits, because they are not evolved from matter, **and live?** for the end of obedience is everlasting life: ‘If anyone keep my word, he will not taste death forever’ (Jn. 8:52); ‘He became to all that obey him the cause of eternal salvation’ (Heb. 5:9).

680. – Secondly, there is a difference between human and divine correction; first, as to the end, because the end of human correction is transitory, for it is directed to living well in this life, which lasts a few days; secondly, as to the reason, because man corrects according to his will, which can be mistaken, yet we obey it. But not so in divine correction: for He instructs us in something useful for eternity, namely, to receive the holiness which He Himself is: ‘Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; let him be your fear and let him be your dread. And he shall be a sanctification to you’ (Is. 8:13). Therefore, he says, they disciplined us for short time; and this in regard to the first: at their pleasure, in regard to the second. But he

disciplines us for our good: ‘I am the Lord who teaches you profitable things’ (Is. 48:17); and this that we may share his holiness. Therefore, we should all the more accept his chastisement.

681. – He continues: **All discipline [chastisement] seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness [justice] to those who have been trained by it.** This is the third reason, which is drawn from the benefit of the correction. But since chastisements are forms of medicine, the same judgement seems to be true of chastisement as of medicine. But just as medicine, when it is taken, is bitter and disgusting, and yet its end is very sweet and desirable, so chastisement, although it is harder to endure, brings forth the best fruit. But it should be noted that chastisement, i.e., discipline, is drawn from the word ‘to learn.’ But children, who are taught, learn from the rod. Therefore, discipline is taken for science, as in the beginning of *Posterior Analytics*: ‘Every intellectual doctrine and discipline comes into existence from pre-existing knowledge,’ which in Greek is called *epistemon*. But sometimes it is taken for correction, which in Greek is *paideia*. He says, therefore: **All chastisement**, which is instruction by blows and annoyances, for the moment, indeed, **seems painful rather than pleasant**; because outwardly it brings sadness in enduring it, but inwardly it brings sweetness because of the end intended. Hence he says, **seems** and not ‘is’: ‘As sad and always rejoicing’ (2 Cor. 6:10); ‘A woman, when in labor, is sorrowful; but when she has brought forth, she no longer remembers the anguish, for her joy’ (Jn. 16:21); ‘That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation works for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory’ (2 Cor. 4:17).

682. – Therefore, he says, **later it yields fruit**, for fruit implies sweetness: hence, fruition is delight in the end now achieved. **Most peaceful**, for fruit is had here with disturbance of external inconveniences and internal trials; therefore, it is not most peaceful, as there. In glory, indeed, there will be no inward gnawing of conscience, no inclination to sin, no outward affliction. For according to Augustine, whatever you desire will be there; therefore, the fruit will be most peaceful: peaceful in the tranquility of conscience; more peaceful in obtaining the first stoke; most peaceful in obtaining the second: ‘My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, in the tabernacles of confidence and in wealthy rest’ (Is. 32:18); ‘Her fruit is better the chiefest and purest gold’ (Pr. 3:14). Therefore, **it will yield the fruit of righteousness [justice]**, i.e., which justice earns: ‘To him that sows justice there is a faithful reward’ (Pr. 11:30). Or **of justice**, i.e., to lay hold on justice: ‘Sow for yourselves in justice and reap in the mouth of mercy’ (Hos 10:12); ‘Going, they went and wept, sheaves’ (Ps. 125:6). But fruit is brought forth only **to them that are exercised in it**, i.e., by discipline: ‘Strong meat is for the perfect; for those who by custom have their senses exercised’ (Heb. 5:14).

12-3

Heb. 12:12-17

¹²Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled; ¹⁶that no one be immoral or irreligious like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

683. – Having indicated how we should behave toward enduring evils of chastisement, the Apostle now shows how we should act to avoid the evils of guilt. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives his admonition; secondly, the reasons (v. 18). In regard to the first he warns men who sin; secondly, those not yet sinning (v. 14). But there are two kinds of sin: omission and transgression: first, therefore, he warns against sins of omission; secondly, against sins of transgression (v. 18).

684. – A sin of omission occurs in two ways: one, when a person fails to do good; another, by failing to endure evil and adversity. In regard to the first he says, **Therefore**, i.e., because chastisement yields the most peaceable fruit, then to obtain this fruit, **lift your drooping hands**. For since the hand is the organ of the organs, it is said to droop, when it stops performing good works; therefore, it must be lifted up by a right intention to do things pleasing to God: ‘Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God’ (Lam 3:41); ‘The lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice’ (Ps. 140:2); ‘The slothful hand has wrought poverty; but the hand of the industrious riches’ (Pr. 10:4); ‘The hand of the valiant shall bear rule, but that which is slothful shall be under tribute’ (Pr. 12:24). As a sign of this, when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel conquered; but when he let them fall, Amalek overcame them (Ex. 17:11).

In regard to the other sin of omission he says, **strengthen your weak knees**. The entire weight of the body is held up by the knees. Therefore, those who have not the courage to endure adversity bravely have weak knees. Therefore, this weakness must be put aside: ‘You have strengthened the weary hands; your words have confirmed them that were staggering, and you have strengthened the trembling knees’ (Jb. 4:3); ‘Strengthen the feeble hands and confirm the weak knees’ (Is. 35:3). Therefore, lift up the hand and knees and do not give in to idleness or hesitate because of weakness.

685. – Then (v. 13) he rebukes the sin of transgression. Now that sin is a kind of obliqueness and curvature. For that is straight whose middle does not point to a direction different from the extremes, i.e., whose action does not depart from its proper intention and end. But there are three kinds of obliqueness: namely in the affections, in action and in understanding. From sinful affection follows obliqueness in the

understanding and depravity in loving. Therefore, in regard to the first, which is the root of the others he says, **make straight paths for your feet**, i.e., correct affections. For as the feet carry the body, so the affections carry the mind. Therefore, straight feet are proper affections: ‘Their feet were straight feet’ (Ez. 1:7). Therefore, make straight the affections, by which the whole body is carried spiritually. ‘Make straight in the wilderness the paths of our Lord’ (Is. 40:3) i.e., as far as in you lies, devote yourself to this. In regard to the second, he says, **so that what is lame** as to outward action. For just as the tibia is said to be lame, when it does not follow the rule of the locomotive power, so an action is lame when it turns to the right in prosperity or to the left in adversity, and does not follow the rule of divine law: ‘This is the way: walk in it and do not go aside to the right or left’ (Is. 30:21). Or he limps who along with the Gospel observes the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. In regard to obliqueness of the understanding he says, **may not be put out of joint**. For an intellectual error follows an evil action: ‘They err that do evil’ (Pr. 14:22); ‘These things they thought and were deceived; for their own malice blinded them’ (Wis. 2:21). Therefore, a person who would avoid those two deviations must have his feet and his affects right; hence, he says, **but rather be healed**. For just as bodily health consists in the proper balance of the humors, so spiritual health in the proper arrangement of the affections: ‘Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed’ (Jer. 17:14).

686. – Then (v. 14) he advises those who do not sin to avoid sin. In regard to this he does two things: first, he prefaces certain remedies for helping to avoid all sins; secondly, he advises them to avoid all sins (v. 15b).

687. – In regard to the first it should be noted that there are various ends of human actions: for some are ordained to another, as justice ordains a man to his neighbor; and the end is peace; hence, Is (32:17): ‘Peace will be the work of justice.’ Others are ordained to the one acting, as fasting, and the end is purity. For we fast for the sake of cleanness and purity. In regard to the first, he says, **Strive for peace**, i.e., do not only have it, but seek how to have it with all men: ‘If it be possible, as much as in you lies, have peace with all men’ (Rom. 12:18); ‘Seek after peace and pursue it’ (Ps. 33:15). In regard to the second he says, **and for the holiness**: ‘Let us wash ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit’ (2 Cor. 7:1).

688. – He shows that those remedies are necessary by indicating the two injuries we incur without them: first, the loss of glory in the future and of grace in the present. In regard to the first he says, **without which no man shall see God**, in which happiness consists: ‘This is eternal life: That they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent’ (Jn. 17:50). As if to say: Without peace toward our neighbor, and cleanness and purity in regard to ourselves, we cannot be happy: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God’ (Mt. 5:9). But the inheritance of the beatific vision is owed only to sons: ‘Nothing defiled shall enter into it’ (Rev. 21:27); ‘Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle? He that enters without stain’ (Ps. 14:1); ‘Who shall ascend into the mountain of the

Lord? The innocent in hands and the clean of heart' (Ps. 23:3). In regard to the second loss, namely, of God's grace in the present he says, **see to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God**. For grace is lost by discord and uncleanness: 'He is not a God of dissension, but of peace' (1 Cor. 4:33); 'His place was made in peace' (Ps. 75:3); 'Your eyes are too pure to behold evil; and you cannot look on iniquity' (Hab. 1:13); 'The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful... He shall not abide when iniquity comes in' (Wis. 1:5). But the Apostle is speaking figuratively. For grace is not obtained by merit; otherwise, grace would not be grace. Yet a man must do what he can. But God in His most generous will gives it to all who prepare themselves: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man open to me, I will come in to him' (Rev. 3:20); 'He will that all men be saved' (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, God's grace is not wanting to any one, but it communicates itself to all, as far as it is concerned, just as the sun is not wanting to the eyes of the blind. He says, therefore: **see that no one fail to obtain the grace of God**.

689. – But on the other hand: if grace is not given because of works, but only by the fact that a person places no obstacle, it seems to follow that the possession of grace depends solely on free will and not on God's choice. This is Pelagius's error. I answer that the very fact that a person places no obstacle is due to grace. Hence, if anyone places an obstacle and his heart is moved to remove it, this is due to the gift of God's grace calling by His mercy: 'But when it pleased him who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace' (Gal. 1:15). But this gift of grace is not sanctifying grace. Therefore, the fact that a person removes that obstacle is owing to God's mercy; if it is not removed, it is owing to God's justice. But he does not say, 'lest you fail,' but lest anyone fail, because everyone should be solicitous for his neighbor: 'He gave everyone commandment concerning his neighbor' (Sir. 17:12).

690. – Then (v. 15b) he comes specifically to advising the avoidance of sins contrary to each of the aforesaid medicines: first, he advises them to avoid sins contrary to peace; secondly, contrary to holiness (v. 16).

691. – He says, therefore, **that no root of bitterness spring up and cause trouble**. That is bitter which cannot be tasted without disgust. Therefore, a person's conversation is said to be bitter when it cannot be without offending those with whom he lives. Against this it is said of wisdom: 'Her conversation has no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness' (Wis. 8:16). Therefore, one knows how to live in wisdom, when his conversation is not bitter. This happens when his words and deeds are not harsh. Hence he says, **that no root of bitterness spring up and cause trouble**, i.e., bitterness gradually begun and rooted in the heart, springing up to cause trouble [hinder peace] and consequently, grace and the vision of God: 'Lest there should be among you a root bringing forth gall and bitterness' (Deut 29:18): 'Ephraim has provoked me to wrath with his bitterness' (Hos 12:14). Or the root of bitterness is an evil thought of harmful pleasure, which springs up when by consent one accomplishes the deed. And by it many become defiled, because not only the one in whom it exists but others also are defiled by his example: 'A little leaven corrupts the whole lump' (1 Cor. 5:6).

692. – Then when he says, **Lest there be any one immoral [fornicator] or profane, as Esau**, he warns them to avoid sins contrary to holiness, to which are specifically opposed carnal sins, such as gluttony and lust, which are completed in carnal delight, by which the mind is defiled. Therefore, they defile the mind and the flesh. Hence he particularly warns them to avoid these, saying: each one looking diligently, not only in himself, but also lest he be a fornicator and sin against his neighbor: ‘Mutually guard each other’s purity’ (Augustine); ‘Fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be so much as named among you, as becomes saints’ (Eph. 5:3); ‘Keep yourself from all fornication’ (Tob. 4:13). Secondly, he forbids gluttony, saying, **or profane** person. Here profane suggests something far from the fane, such as gluttons are, who make a god of their belly, as Esau. He uses Esau as an example because he sold his birthright because of gluttony. So, too, a glutton sells his eternal inheritance for a bit of food. But Esau was not only a glutton, he was also lustful, because he married two foreign wives against his parents’ will. The birthright had two portions and, before Aaron’s priesthood, included the priestly honor; hence in selling his birthright he was committing simony. Therefore, it seems that Jacob, too, who purchased it, committed simony. But this is not so, for Jacob understood through the Holy Spirit that it was owed to him according to what is stated in Malachi (1:2): ‘Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.’ Therefore, he did not buy it, but redeemed from an unjust possessor something that was owed to him. And this is what he says:

Who, namely Esau, sold his birthright for a single meal.

693. – Then he shows the punishment which followed when he says, **for you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected**. For it says in Genesis (27:30) that after Isaac had blessed Jacob, Esau came and asked for a blessing, which he did not obtain, although his father did it unknowingly, because in that stupor which he experienced, he was in ecstasy and learned from the Holy Spirit that he was not to retract what he had done; hence, he said: ‘I have blessed him and he shall be blessed’ (Gen. 27:33). Therefore, Esau by the counsel of the Holy Spirit was rejected. This gives us to understand that no one should neglect to do well as long as he lives, no matter how rejected he may be in God’s foreknowledge; because after this life no one can obtain God’s inheritance, even though it be naturally desired.

694. – **For he found no place to repent, though he sought it with tears**. For as it is recorded in Genesis (27:34): ‘He roared out with a great cry, and being in great consternation, said: Bless me also, my father.’

But on the other hand it says in Ezekiel (18:21): ‘If the wicked do penance for all his sins, which he has committed, and keep all my commandments and do judgement and justice, living he shall live, and he shall not die.’ I answer that as long as one is living in this world, he can do true penance. But sometimes a person repents not from a love of justice, but from the fear of punishment or temporal harm. This is the way Esau repented, not because he had sold his birthright, but for the rejection. Consequently,

his penance was not accepted, because it was not genuine. For this is the way the damned in hell repent, as it says in Wisdom (5:3): ‘Repenting,’ not because they had sinned, but because they have been excluded.

695. – Yet, according to a Gloss, the phrase, fornicator or profane person, has another meaning, namely, that fornicator is one who along with the faith observes the carnal ceremonies, as though a having concubine as well as a wife; but a profane person, i.e., far from the fane is, as it were, entirely unbelieving.

Heb. 12:18-24

¹⁸For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, ¹⁹and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” ²¹Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” ²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

696. – Having warned them to avoid the evils of guilt, the Apostle now assigns the reason, which is based on a comparison between the Old and New Testaments. In regard to this he does two things: first, he makes the comparison; secondly, he argues from it (v. 25). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions what pertains to the Old Testament; secondly, what pertains to the New (v. 22).

In regard to the first it should be noted that, as Augustine says: ‘The slight difference between the Law and the Gospel is fear and love,’ for the Law was as our pedagogue in Christ. But children are influenced by fear; ‘The wicked man being scourged, the fool shall be wiser’ (Pr. 19:25). Therefore, the Apostle says here that when the Law was given, certain fearful things took place.

First, therefore, he mentions the things which frightened those to whom the Law was given; secondly, he deals with the terror inspired by the lawgiver (v. 21). In regard to the first he mentions three things: first, the frightening things they saw; secondly, the frightening things they heard (v. 19); thirdly, in regard to threats (v. 19c).

697. – Those three things are related to the three things which were frightening there, namely, on the part of God, on the part of the Law, and on the part of the ministers of the Law. On the part of God he mentions three frightening things, namely, the zeal to punish, the severity of the punishment and the concealment of the one giving the Law. The zeal is designated by fire: ‘The Lord, your God, is a consuming fire, a jealous God’ (Deut. 4:24); ‘He is like a refining fire’ (Mal. 3:20). Hence, God frequently calls Himself jealous, because He does not let His spouse’s crime go unavenged: ‘I am the Lord, your God, mighty, jealous’ (Ex. 20:5); ‘The Lord, his name is Jealous’ (Ex. 34:14); ‘The jealousy and rage of the husband will not spare in the day of revenge’ (Pr. 6:34). Hence it says here: **For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire.** For that fire, as Exodus (19:18) says, was corporeal and, therefore, could be felt; it was in a definite place, so that one could approach it. But in the New Law the fire of the Holy Spirit was given (Ac. 2). For as the fire of emulation appeared to the Jews fifty days

after their departure from Egypt, so the Holy Spirit's fire, which could not be sensed, but perceived by the mind, appeared to the disciples on the fiftieth day after the resurrection: 'From above he sent fire into my bones and has instructed me' (Lam 1:13). But that fire was infinite in nature and place, for 'he inhabits light inaccessible' (1 Tim. 6:16) and could not be approached.

698. – The severity of the punishment is signified by the whirlwind, which is wind accompanied by rain: 'He shall crush me in a whirlwind' (Jb. 9:17). Or it can refer to temptations. For the Law did not restrain concupiscence, because it did not give grace that would aid *ex opere operato*, but it only repressed the act; consequently, it generated a whirlwind of temptations.

699. – But the concealment of the lawgiver is signified by the darkness, which showed that the state of the Law was hidden, i.e., veiled: 'Even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart' (2 Cor. 3:15). But in the New Law that veil is removed: as a sign of this the veil of the temple was rent in Christ's passion, because 'we behold the glory of the Lord with open face' (2 Cor. 3:18). Likewise, that darkness signifies the divine excellence. For just as that which is in the dark cannot be clearly seen, and a strong light blinds the eye, so He Who inhabits light inaccessible made Himself dark.

700. – Then when he says, **and a tempest**, he mentions the things terrifying to the hearing on the part of the Law. Now there were three terrifying things to the Law, namely, the severity of the threats, the strictness of the precepts, and the large number of precepts. In regard to the first he says, **and a tempest** which, strictly speaking, is a disturbance of the sea; but in a wide sense it is a disturbance of the air accompanied by whirlwind and rain. Hence it signifies the strictness of the precepts, whose fulfillment was enjoined on man as though he were waging war against himself. The voice of words signifies the vast number of precepts. These were God's words spoken by an angel: 'Being ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator' (Gal. 3:19). For God spoke there through angels. All these things were so terrifying that those who heard that voice entreated that **no further message be spoken to them**. Hence, it is stated in Exodus (20:18): 'Being terrified and struck with fear, they stood afar off, saying to Moses: You speak to us and we will hear. Let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.'

701. – He mentions the reason why they excused themselves, namely, because they could not endure God's words; hence, they could not endure the order that was given: 'What is all flesh that it should hear the voice of the living God, who speaks out of the midst of the fire, as we have heard, and be able to live' (Date: 5:26). For God's words are said to be unendurable either when they cannot be understood by the intellect or transcend the affections.

702. – Then he gives the threatened punishment, saying: **And if even a beast shall touch the mountain, it shall be stoned**: 'Everyone that touches the mount, dying he shall die. No hands shall touch him, but he shall be stoned to death, or be shot through with arrows. Whether it be beast or man, he shall not live'

(Ex. 19:12). The Apostle, to heighten the terror, mentions here only the beasts which the Law commands to be killed, in order to show the gravity of sin. Yet mystically the mountain is the loftiness of the divine mysteries, and the beast is a man living bestially: ‘Man, when he was in honor, did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them’ (Ps. 48:13). This beast touches the mount in two ways: first, by blasphemy: ‘They have set their mouth against heaven’ (Ps. 72:9); ‘Bring forth the blasphemer outside the camp..., and let all the people stone him’ (Lev. 24:14); secondly, by obtruding himself into divine matters: ‘He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory’ (Pr. 25:27).

703. – From all this he draws the conclusion, namely, that they were terrifying things, because not even the beasts were spared; hence he says, **and so terrible was the sight**. This indicates the difference between the New and Old Testaments, because the Old Testament was given in terror to terrify the hearts of Jews, who were prone to idolatry; but the New was given in love: ‘You have not received the spirit of slavery again in fear, but you have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba: Father’ (Rom. 8:15). Hence Christ did not begin His preaching with fearful things, but promised the kingdom of heaven: ‘Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Mt. 3:2); ‘The law of clemency is on his tongue’ (Pr. 31:26).

704. – Then when he says, **Moses said: I am frightened, and tremble**, he deals with the lawgiver’s fear, namely Moses: ‘For the law was given by Moses’ (Jn. 1:17). Now if Moses himself in giving the Law was so frightened as to say, I am frightened inwardly and I tremble outwardly, and he was more perfect than the rest, this was a sign that the Law was terrifying even to the perfect: because it did not give grace but merely disclosed guilt. Hence, it was a heavy yoke of which Peter (Ac. 15:10) says: ‘which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.’ But Christ’s law is a sweet yoke, because ‘the charity of God has been poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’ (Rom. 5:5). Hence, it should be noted that the words the Apostle uses here are not found in Exodus (20). Perhaps he took them from Exodus (4:10), where Moses was frightened at the sight of the burning bush and said: ‘I am not eloquent from yesterday or the day before’; after which he said, in deed at least, if not in word: I am frightened and tremble.’ Or perhaps the Apostle was using another version which we do not have. But it all shows that the Old Law was a law of fear.

705. – Then he mentions the conditions of the New Testament, saying: **But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God**. Here he shows the things proposed to us in it; and three things are promised to us, namely, the hope of future glory, participation in the Church, and familiarity with God.

706. – In heavenly glory there are two things which will particularly gladden the just, namely, the enjoyment of the godhead and companionship with the saints. For no good is joyfully possessed without companions, as Boethius says: and in Ps. 132 (v. 1): ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren

to dwell together.’ But enjoyment consists in two things, namely, in the intellect’s vision and in the will’s delight. For, as Augustine says: ‘We enjoy the things we know, in which the delighted will rests.’ Because of the vision he says, **You have come to mount Zion**, for Zion signifies the loftiness of divine contemplation: ‘Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnity’ (Is. 33:20). The gladness and pleasure of the will is signified by the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the city of the living God: ‘Jerusalem, which is built as a city’ (Ps. 121:3); ‘Who has placed peace in your borders: and filled you with the fat of corn’ (Ps. 147:12, 14); ‘That Jerusalem which is above is free’ (Gal. 4:26). Hence, there will be nothing further to be desired: ‘Since I am become in his presence as one finding peace’ (S of S 8:10).

707. – But an additional joy will be the company of the saints, of whom he says, **and to innumerable angels**: ‘Their angels always see the face of my Father in heaven’ (Mt. 18:10). That there are thousands is clear from Dan (7:10): ‘Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him’; ‘Is there any numbering of his soldiers?’ (Jb. 25:3); ‘And the number of them was thousands of thousands’ (Rev. 5:11).

708. – **And to the assembly of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven**: these are the members of the Church, which is called the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). The firstborn saints, who received the gifts of grace first and more abundantly, are the apostles, through whom it flows to others: ‘And not only it, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:23); ‘Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets’ (Eph. 2:20). For just as in ancient times among the Romans, the senators, who were raised to great dignity and whom the first Pompilius inscribed on golden tablets, were called ‘Chosen Fathers,’ so the Apostle here, to indicate the dignity of the apostles, says that they are written in heaven. The book in which this is written is the knowledge God has within himself of those to be saved. Hence, just as that which is written does not soon slip from memory, so those who are written there by final justice will be saved infallibly. Hence, that book is called the book of life: ‘Rejoice and be glad, because your names are written in heaven’ (Lk. 10:20).

709. – Then when he says, **and to a judge who is God of all**, he shows how they have attained familiarity with God: first, with God the Father, because you are come to a judge Who is God of all, i.e., God the Father, from Whom judicial authority proceeds. For it is from the Father that the Son has power to judge: ‘This is not befitting you who judge the whole earth’ (Gen. 8:25). But the statement in Jn (5:22) that the Father has given all judgement to the Son is understood as referring to His bodily presence, because the sole person of the Son will appear in the judgement. But this approach is by faith and charity. ‘Being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom also we have access through faith into this grace, wherein we stand’ (Rom. 5:1).

710. – Secondly, familiarity with the Holy Spirit when he says, **and to the spirits of just men made perfect**. According to a Gloss here, there are three versions, of which the best is in Greek: ‘And the Spirit

of the just made perfect,' i.e., you have come to the Holy Spirit Who makes the saints perfect in justice: 'As I see, there is a spirit in men' (Jb. 32:88); 'Know you not that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you?' (1 Cor. 3:16). For all justice and perfection is from the Holy Spirit. Another version has: 'And of the spirits of the just made perfect.' Here the sense is: 'You have come to God Who is indeed the judge of all, but is the inheritance of the spirits of the just made perfect'; 'The Lord is my portion, says my soul' (Lam 3:24). The third version has: 'And the spirit of the just made perfect,' i.e., that we might be with the spirits of the saints who are just and perfect. But the first is better and clearer.

711. – Thirdly, as to familiarity with the Son he says: **and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant**. As if to say: You have come to Christ, Who is the mediator of that new pact in which spiritual things are promised to us. But not so Moses; hence he says above (9:15): 'For if the blood of goats and heifers, and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ?' And the Apostle speaks according to the rite of the Old Law where, after the Law was given, the People were sprinkled with blood, which was a figure of Christ's blood, by which the faithful were to be cleansed.

712. – Then he continues: **that speaks more graciously [better] than the blood of Abel**. For the shedding of Christ's blood was prefigured in the shedding of the blood of all the just from the beginning of the world: 'The lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world' (Rev. 13:8), i.e., foreseen to be slain. Therefore, the shedding of Abel's blood was a sign of that shedding. But Christ's blood speaks better than Abel's blood, which cries for vengeance, but Christ's blood cried for pardon: 'Father, forgive them' (Lk. 23:34); 'He prayed for transgressors' (Is. 55:12); 'This is the blood of the new covenant, which shall be shed for you unto the remission of sins' (Mt. 26:28). Or **speaking better**, i.e., making to speak better, because the blood of Abel makes us say that Abel was a pure and just man; but the blood of Christ makes us say that Christ is true God making us just.

12-5

Heb. 12:25-29

²⁵See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

²⁶His voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.” ²⁷This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of what is shaken, as of what has been made, in order that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire.

713. – After describing the condition of both testaments, the Apostle now argues from this description and does two things: first, he argues; secondly, he draws the conclusion (v. 28). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he prefaces his intention; secondly, he argues to his conclusion (v. 25b).

714. – He says, therefore: Thus we have said that the blood of Christ speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. **See to it, therefore, that you do not refuse**, i.e., despise, **him that is speaking**, i.e., fulfill what he says. But the blood of Christ says two things to us: first, it speaks by reminding us of His favor, by which He remitted our sins. Therefore, one who sins again, despises the one speaking. Furthermore, He speaks by exhorting us to imitate Him: ‘Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example to follow in his footsteps’ (1 Pt 2:2). Therefore, one who does not take up His cross to follow, refuses the one speaking: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts’ (Ps. 94:8); ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased’ (Mt. 17:5).

715. – Then when he says, **For if they escaped not, much more shall not we**, he argues by comparing the speaking of the Old Testament to that of the New; and this in regard to two things: first, as to the manner of speaking; secondly, as to the efficacy of the speaking.

716. – The manner of speaking, because He spoke upon earth; but here He speaks from heaven. Hence, he says, **If they**, namely, the ancient fathers, **refused him who warned them on earth**, namely, Christ: ‘For I myself that spoke, behold I am here’ (Is. 52:6), namely, by angels or prophets: ‘God who a sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets’ (Heb. 1:1); or **him**, i.e., the angel through whom the Law was given to Moses: ‘Ordained by angels’ (Gal. 3:19); ‘For if the word spoken by angels became steadfast’ (Heb. 2:2): ‘This is Moses who was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on mount Sinai, and with our fathers’ (Ac. 7:38) did not escape the vengeance of the divine law: ‘The way to escape shall fail them’ (Jb. 11:20): ‘Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense’ (Heb. 2:2).

717. – The conclusion follows by arguing from the lesser case: If those who refused the one speaking upon earth did not escape, **much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven;** because we shall not be able to escape. For the one who speaks to us in the New Testament is Christ already in heaven: ‘The Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven’ (Mk 16:19); ‘From heaven he made you to hear his voice that he might teach you’ (Dt. 4:36). Therefore, the doctrine of the Old Testament is the doctrine of Christ speaking on earth for two reasons: because there under the figure of earthly things He spoke of heavenly things; furthermore, He promised earthly things there. But the doctrine of the New Testament is that of Christ speaking from heaven, because we turn earthly things into signs of heavenly things by a mystical interpretation. Likewise, heavenly things are promised in it: ‘For your reward is great in heaven’ (Mt. 5:12); ‘If I speak to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how will you believe, if I speak to you of heavenly things?’ (Jn. 3:12).

718. – Then he compares the two testaments in regard to the efficacy of the speaking. As to the efficacy of the Old Testament’s speaking he says, **His voice then shook the earth**, i.e., wrought many changes on earth, namely, by the signs in Egypt, by the division of the sea, by the earthquake in the desert: ‘The earth was moved: and the heavens dropped at the presence of the God of Sinai, at the presence of the God of Israel’ (Ps. 67:10). This signified that all that speaking moved their hearts by earthly promises.

719. – Then when he says, **but now he has promised**, he deals with the efficacy of the New Testament and proves it by the authority of a prophet, and then explains it.

720. – That authority is found in Hag (2:7) but not according to our version; for we have: ‘Yet one little while, and I will move the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.’ But the Apostle says, **Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven**. But the sense is the same. And it is clear that those words were uttered near the end of the time of the Old Testament, namely, after the return from captivity; at which time nothing remained of the Old Testament. Therefore, it is clear that what was promised was to be fulfilled in the New Testament, namely, the new heaven and the new earth: ‘Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth’ (Is. 65:17). This creation was shown to John in the spirit: ‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth’ (Rev. 21:1). For in that new creation the heavens will be moved. But heaven can be taken in two senses: in one way for the ethereal heaven and that will be cleansed by the fire of the final conflagration, as has been stated above. In another way, the starry heaven, which will not be cleansed, but will be changed to a new state: for it will cease its motion and the clarity of its parts will be increased, because ‘The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven times brighter’ (Is. 30:26). He says, therefore, **but now**, i.e., through the New Testament, **he promises, saying, Yet once more and I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven**.

721. – Then when he says, **This phrase, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of what is shaken**, he explains the words of the prophecy; and he lays great stress on the phrase, **Yet once more**. For in saying, **yet**, he shows that they are moveable; but in saying, **once more**, he indicates that they are to be changed from the state of movability and corruptibility to a state of incorruption and immutability. For if they were to remain in a state of changeableness after that change, he would not have said, **once more**, but ‘again and again.’ This is against Origen who believed that the world will be renewed an infinitude of time and be recovered. He says, therefore: and in that he says, ‘Yet once more,’ he indicates the removal of what is shaken, to a state of immovableness. And as though someone were asking whether God can do this, he adds, **as of what has been made**. For all things made are subject to God’s power; hence, just as God made them from nothing, so He can change them as He wills. And this **in order that what cannot be shaken may remain**, i.e., that are immovable, i.e., that they remain immovable as to their essences, but changed as to certain accidental dispositions: ‘As a vesture you will change them, and they shall be changed’ (Ps. 101:28). This has been explained in chap. 1. From all this it is clear that although the things of the Old Testament were moved, it was not to a state of incorruption and immutability; but this is done only in the New, to signify that the promises of the Old Testament were changeable, but not those of the New.

722. – Then when he says, **Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken**, he reaches the main conclusion. For after commending in many ways the grace and benefits conferred and to be conferred upon us by Christ, his main desire is to induce us to serve Him. he concludes that inasmuch as immovable things are promised in the New Testament, we should serve Christ Who promised them, in fear and reverence. And that is the principal conclusion.

723. – Hence, he first recalls the favor granted, saying, **therefore**, inasmuch as God promises a heaven and an immovable earth, by which are signified the immovable and eternal good things to come, **let us be grateful**, i.e., give thanks: ‘Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift’ (2 Cor. 9:15). And **receive**, because we receive, if not the reality, yet in the hope of the promise, **a kingdom that cannot be shaken**: ‘Your kingdom is a kingdom of all ages’ (Ps. 144:13); ‘Of his kingdom there will be no end’ (Lk. 1:33). Or by, **receiving**, is understood the gift of grace, which we receive in the present as a pledge of future glory. Therefore, he says: **Therefore receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken**, i.e., of future glory, which is promised to us: ‘Fear not, little flock, because it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom’ (Lk. 12:32). For what we hope for, we have, namely, the grace we have received as a beginning of glory. For if nature is not lacking in what is necessary, much less God. Therefore, He gives us the hope of that kingdom, and consequently, the grace, by which we may arrive at it: ‘We have access by faith into grace’ (Rom. 5:2); ‘The Lord will give grace and glory’ (Ps. 83:12).

724. – He continues thus: **and so let us offer to God acceptable worship**. Here he comes to the service as something required of us. For natural reason dictates that we are obligated to show reverence and honor

to anyone from whom we receive many favors; therefore, much more to God, Who has given us the greatest things and has promised us an infinitude of them. Hence, he says that by that grace, namely, given and to be given to us, **let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe**. For it is not enough merely to serve God, which can be done by outward action; we must also please Him by a right intention and by love: ‘He pleased God and was beloved’ (Wis. 4:10); ‘I will please the Lord in the land of the living’ (Ps. 114:9). But God is especially served by an inward service: ‘Let us serve him in holiness and justice’ (Lk. 1:74). Now by reason of creation God is called Lord, but by reason of regeneration, Father. But to a Lord fear is owed, and to a Father love and reverence: ‘The son honors the father, and the servant fears his lord. If I am your father, where is my honor; and if I am your Lord, where is my fear’ (Mal. 1:6). Therefore, the Lord should be served in fear and in reverence: ‘Serve the Lord in fear; and rejoice unto him with trembling’ (Ps. 2:11).

725. – That we should serve God in that manner he proves by the authority of Deuteronomy (4:24): **For our God is a consuming fire**. When God is said to be a fire, it does not mean that He is something corporeal, but it is because intelligible things are designated by sense-perceptible things, among which fire has greater nobility and clarity; and greater activity; and a higher natural place; and is more cleansing and more consuming. Therefore, God is especially called fire on account of His clarity, because He inhabits light inaccessible (1 Tim. 6:16), and because He is supremely active: ‘You have worked all our works in us’ (Is. 26:12), and He is in a loftier place: ‘The Lord is high above all nations; and his glory above the heavens’ (Ps. 112:4). Furthermore, he cleanses and as it were, consumes sins; hence, he says that **he is a consuming fire**: ‘He is like a refining fire’ (Mal. 3:2); and he continues: ‘And he shall purify the sons of Levi’; ‘making purgation of sins’ (Heb. 1:3). He also consumes sinners by punishing: ‘But a certain dread in expectation of judgement and the rage of a fire that shall consume the adversaries’ (Heb. 10:27). Therefore, because such things are promised to us: ‘And the light of Israel shall be as a fire, and the Holy One thereof as a flame’ (Is. 10:17); ‘A fire shall go before them and shall burn up enemies round about’ (Ps. 96:3), we should strive to serve and please God

13-1

Heb. 13:1-8

¹Let brotherly love continue. ²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. ³Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body. ⁴Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous. ⁵Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you." ⁶Hence we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?" ⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.

726. – Having instructed them how to bear with evil, the Apostle now tells them how to act in doing good. Hence, according to a Gloss he is beginning his moral instruction after commending and urging them to imitate him. in regard to this he does two things: first, he urges them to good; secondly, he prays for them (v. 20). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows them how to do good to their neighbor; secondly, to themselves (v. 4); thirdly, to prelates (v. 7).

727. – He says, therefore: Thus, we have said that an immovable kingdom has been promised to us. If we would enter it, we must have charity: **Let brotherly love continue**: 'He that does not love his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see' (1 Jn. 4:20); 'Honor one another; love the brotherhood' (1 Pt 2:17). But because charity is not idle, as Gregory says, he urges them to acts of charity: 'Let us love not in tongue but in deed and in truth' (1 Jn. 3:18). Hence, he says that we should show charity to travelers by hospitality, to those in bands by compassion, to the poor by coming to their aid. In regard to the first he says, **do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers**.

728. – He says, **do not neglect**, because formerly, when they were prosperous, they were very hospitable; but now that they were poor and could not do so much, he exhorts them to continue to do as much as possible: 'Pursue hospitality' (Rom. 12:13). He makes special mention of hospitality, because a person who receives travelers does three acts of charity at once, because he receives and feeds and gives them drink: 'Using hospitality one towards another without murmuring' (1 Pt 4:9). He gives the reason when he says, **for thereby some have entertained angels unawares**, as in the case of Abraham and Lot (Gen. 18 & 19). Another version reads: 'By this, as unawares, they entertained angels,' because they did not believe that they were angels. This was also true in the beginning; hence, Abraham adored them, thinking that they were holy men sent from God. But he adored them with adoration called *dulia*, which is shown to saints; and he offered them food, as though they were men. But after he understood that they were

angels in whom God was speaking, he spoke to them as to God, saying: ‘This is not befitting you who judge all the earth’ (Gen. 18:25); and Lot in like manner.

729. – In regard to the second he says, **Remember them that are in prison**, i.e., those who for the love of God were sent to prison. Remember them by visiting and redeeming, **as though in prison with them**: ‘I was in prison and you visited me’ (Mt. 25:36). Against this Isaiah (14:27) says: ‘I opened not the prison to his prisoners.’ But they did this sometimes, as is clear from Hebrews (10:34). But it particularly pertains to a work of mercy to regard another’s suffering as one’s own.

730. – In regard to the third he says, and **those that are ill-treated** [labor] either with bodily labor: ‘You shall eat the labors of your hands’ (Ps. 127:2) or with spiritual solicitude: The farmer that labors must first partake of the fruits’ (2 Tim. 2:6); or in enduring evils: ‘I have perceived that in these also there was labor, and vexation of spirit’ (Ec 1:17). In short, our whole life is a labor: ‘Man is born to labor as a bird to fly’ (Jb. 5:7). Remember, **since you are also in the body**, by which you have experienced what those who labor need: ‘Judge of the disposition of your neighbor by yourself’ (Sir. 31:18); ‘All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them’ (Mt. 7:12).

731. – Then (v. 4) he urges them to do good to themselves. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives an admonition against the concupiscences of carnal pleasures; secondly, against coveting external things (v. 5).

732. – It should be noted that sin in regard to sex occurs in two ways: in one way by the illicit union of one married person with another; as to this he says, **Let marriage be held in honor among all** who would not be continent: not fornication. It is called honorable, when it takes place with all the circumstances owed to marriage. This shows that the marriage act can exist without sin; which is against certain heretics: ‘If a virgin marry, she does not sin’ (1 Cor. 7:28). Hence, to show that the marriage act is good, the Lord performed His first sign during a marriage and ennobled marriage by His bodily presence and willed to be born of a married woman. In another way by violating the marriage bed, as when a husband approaches another man’s wife, or a woman another’s husband. In regard to this he says, **and the marriage bed undefiled**: ‘So that now they neither keep life, nor marriage undefiled, but one kills another through envy, or grieves him by adultery’ (Wis. 14:24); ‘Happy is the barren, and the undefiled that has not known bed in sin; she shall have fruit in the visitation of holy souls’ (Wis. 3:13).

733. – Then the Apostle adds the reason when he says: **for fornicators and adulterers God will judge**. In this he escapes the error of those who say that God neither punishes nor is concerned about carnal sins: ‘Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things (namely, because of carnal sins) the anger of God comes upon the children of unbelief’ (Eph. 5:6). Therefore, he says, **fornicators**, on

account of which he said, **marriage honorable**; and **adulterers** on account of which he said, **and the bed undefiled**; **God will judge**, i.e., condemn: 'No fornicator or unclean or covetous person (which is a serving of idols) has inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ' (Eph. 5:5).

734. – Then (v. 5) he forbids them to covet external goods, in regard to which one might sin in two ways: in one way by being niggardly; in another way by being covetous. For liberality is a virtue which inclines one to the happy medium between giving and retaining money. As to the first, i.e., niggardliness, he says: **Keep your life from love of money** [covetousness]. For a covetous person is tenacious; hence, Sirach (10:9) says: 'Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man.' As to the second he says, **and be content with what you have**. Those who desire to have more than they have, wish to heap up other things, not being content with what they have: 'Having food and clothing, with these we are content' (1 Tim. 6:8). Or in saying, let your life be free of covetousness, he is forbidding avarice in regard to covetousness and niggardliness; but in saying, be content with what you have, he is excluding the root of avarice, namely, anxiety: 'Be not anxious' (Mt. 6:31). For men are not forbidden to be solicitous about things needed for the future, but care and anxiety should not preoccupy their mind. For one who is so preoccupied with anxiety about the future is 'solicitous of the morrow.'

735. – Then (v. 5b) he gives the reason for this advice, and it is the reason why we should not be excessively anxious, but should do what lies in our power with trust in God's help: for he has said (Jos. 1:5): 'I will not leave you, without giving you what you need; neither will I forsake you, lest you perish from hunger'; 'I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread' (Ps. 36:25). Or I will not forsake you without freeing you from evil. This causes confidence in the heart so that **we can confidently say**, 'I will deal confidently and will not fear' (Is. 12:2).

736. – And what shall we say? The words of Ps. 117 (v. 6): 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me.' He is a helper inasmuch as He delivers from evil: 'A helper in troubles, which have found us exceedingly' (Ps. 45:2); therefore, I will not fear what man shall do to me, i.e., any carnal adversary: 'Who are you to be afraid of a mortal man?' (Is. 51:12); or the devil who is called a man overcome by a man, as Scipio was called African, because he was defeated in Africa: 'A hostile man has done this' (Mt. 13:28).

737. – Then (v. 7) he shows they should do good to their prelates. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows how they should act in regard to their dead prelates, namely, follow their example; secondly, in regard to those living, namely, obey them (v. 17). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows how they should follow the teachings of the good; secondly, how to avoid the doctrine of evil (v. 9).

738. – He says, therefore: **Remember your leaders [prelates], those who spoke to you the word of God**, i.e., the apostles, who have preached to you: ‘Look unto Abraham, your father, and to Sarah that bore you’ (Is. 51:2). But they not only preached by word, but showed what to do by action: ‘The Lord confirming the word with signs that followed’ (Mk 16:20). Remember not only their words, but look to their end: ‘Remember the works of the fathers which they have done in their generations: and you shall receive great glory and an everlasting name’ (1 Macc. 2:51); ‘Take, my brethren, for an example of suffering evil, of labor and patience, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord (Jas. 5:10). But imitate not only **the outcome of their life**, so as to suffer patiently for Christ, but also their manner of life: for a good life leads to a good death: Whose faith follow and do not depart from it.

739. – He continues: **Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today: and the same forever**. According to a Gloss this is the way this section is introduced. For he had said before, I will not leave you or forsake you. But they could say: The one to whom this was said can well trust in God’s help, but not we to whom it was not spoken. But the Apostle rejects this, saying that Christ remains forever; hence, he says, **Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today: and the same forever**. Or it can be referred to what he had just said, namely, that they should imitate the apostles. They could say that the case is not the same, because they were instructed by Christ and served Him, but we not so. Therefore, the Apostle says that Christ remains; hence, he says that we should serve Him. And so he says, **Jesus Christ, yesterday**, namely, in the time of the first apostles, **and today**, namely, in their time, **and the same forever**: ‘I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world’ (Mt. 28:20); ‘Says the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty’ (Rev. 1:8); ‘But you are always the selfsame, and your years shall not fail’ (Ps. 101:28). In these words he shows the eternity of Christ.

13-2

Heb. 13:9-16

⁹**Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents.** ¹⁰**We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.** ¹¹**For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.** ¹²**So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.** ¹³**Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.** ¹⁴**For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come.** ¹⁵**Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.** ¹⁶**Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.**

740. – After exhorting them to follow the example and manner of life of those who have departed, the Apostle now warns them to continue in their teaching. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives the warning; secondly, the reason (v. 10). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he warns them in general; secondly, he explains the warning (v. 9b).

741. – He says, therefore: **Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings.** As if to say: Thus we have said that you should imitate the faith of the apostles. Therefore, do not be led away from their teaching to any other doctrine. Here it should be noted that since truth consists in the mean, which is one, many false statements can be opposed to one truth, just as there are many extremes to one middle. Therefore, the doctrine of faith is one, because only one line can be drawn between two points. But all other doctrines are manifold, because there are many deviations from what is straight. Hence, he says, **by diverse doctrines**, i.e., divided: ‘Their heart is divided: now they shall perish’ (Hos 10:2). These are the doctrines about which he said (1 Tim. 4:1): ‘Doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy.’ Furthermore, they are strange, i.e., straying from the Catholic faith. But such doctrines must not be supported by us, because we are not strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints, and the domestics of God’ (Eph. 2:19).

742. – Then when he says, **For it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace**, he explains in detail which are various and strange doctrines. Here it should be noted that in the early Church there was one error rampant, namely, that it was necessary for salvation to observe the ceremonies of the Law, which consisted especially in partaking of certain foods, such as the paschal lamb (Ex. 12) and in abstaining from certain foods, as is clear from Leviticus (chap. 12) and from other passages. Another error was that of the Nicolaitans, that it was lawful to use bodily pleasures indiscriminately. These words can be applied to both these errors, but more properly to the first. He says, therefore, **Be not led away from the truth by**

diverse and strange doctrines: ‘Be not easily moved from your sense’ (2 Th. 2:2); ‘I wonder that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel’ (Gal. 1:6). For God requires our heart of us: ‘My son, give me your heart’ (Pr. 23:26); therefore, **it is well that the heart be strengthened with grace.** For it should be firm and stable; against which Ps. 39 (v. 13) says: ‘My heart has forsaken me.’ But it is not strengthened with bodily foods, but with sanctifying grace: ‘Justified freely by his grace’ (Rom. 3:24) and with the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, he says, **not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents:** ‘The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ (Rom. 14:17). Therefore, the heart is not established with moderate or superfluous use of food, but rather with God’s grace: ‘His heart is ready to hope in the Lord, his heart is strengthened he shall not be moved until he look over his enemies’ (Ps. 111:8). But hope is an anchor stabilizing the heart: ‘We have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm’ (Heb. 6:18). And he says, **which have not benefited their adherents,** i.e., hope in them, because those who use them for bodily needs profit with bodily health, but those who put their entire interest in them, walk in them. These are the ones whom they do not profit unto the salvation either of soul or body: ‘Shall the holy flesh take away from you your crimes, in which you have boasted?’ (Jer. 11:15).

743. – Then when he says, **We have an altar, from which they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle,** he gives the reason, and it is quite subtle. For, as it is stated in Leviticus (chap. 16), on the tenth day of the seventh month the high priest entered with the blood of a heifer and a goat into the holies because of his own ignorance, and burned their bodies outside the camp. And because it was the priest’s offering, the flesh was not eaten. For whatever they offered for the sin of the priests they did not eat, but burned outside the camp. From that figure the Apostle draws a mystery. For the blood of Christ was prefigured by the blood, as was explained in chapter 9. The heifer and the goat prefigured Christ, because the heifer was the priest’s offering and the goat was immolated for sin. This prefigured that Christ would be immolated for sin: not for His own but for the people’s. Therefore, the immolated heifer and goat is Christ, the Priest, offering Himself for our sins. Therefore, the blood of Christ was brought into the holies and the flesh burned outside the camp. Two things were thereby signified: one, that Christ was immolated in the city by the tongues of the Jews; hence Mark says that He was crucified at the third hour, although He was raised on the Cross at the sixth hour. The other is that by virtue of His Passion Christ brings us within the heavenly holies to the Father. But the fact that the bodies were burned outside the camp, as to our Head, signifies that Christ would suffer outside the gate; but as to us, who are the members, it signifies that Christ is immolated for those who are outside the camp of ceremonies of the Law and of the external senses. For those within the camp did not partake of that flesh. This, therefore, is the figure which the Apostle proposes: first, therefore, he shows what is signified; secondly, he presents the figure (v. 11); thirdly, he draws the conclusion (v. 13).

744. – He says, therefore: Let us strengthen our hearts not with food, but with grace; for we cannot do otherwise, because **we have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.** That altar is the Cross of Christ, on which He was immolated; or Christ Himself in Whom and by Whom we offer our prayers. This is the golden altar spoken of in Rev (chap. 8). Of that altar, therefore, they have no right to eat, i.e., to receive the fruit of Christ's passion and to be incorporated into Him as head, who serve the tabernacle of the ceremonies of the Law: 'If you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing' (Gal. 5:2). Or they serve the tabernacle of the body, who pursue carnal pleasures: 'Make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences' (Rom. 13:14). For such persons received no profit: 'He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgement to himself' (1 Cor. 11:29). But the body is called a tabernacle, because we dwell in it as in a war against enemies and it remains a short while: 'The laying away of my tabernacle is at hand' (2 Pt. 1:14). Therefore, it should not be served.

745. – Then (v. 11) he continues the figure: first, the figure of the Old Testament; secondly, the figure of the New Testament (v. 12).

746. – In regard to the first he says: **For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest are burned outside the camp.** This can be interpreted in two ways: one way thus: **the bodies of those animals**, namely, of the heifer and goat, **are burned outside the camp**, their blood being brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for the sin of the priest and of the multitude. In another way, so that by those beasts Christ or His saints are understood. For Christ and His members were prefigured by all the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Therefore, the body of Christ, Whose blood was brought into the heavenly holies for the sin of the whole world, suffered by fire on the altar of the Cross, and was burned outside the camp, i.e., outside the common society of men, with the fire of charity, with fasts, prayers, and other works of mercy. For these the blood of Christ was efficaciously brought into the holies. The first interpretation is literal.

747. – Wherefore, **Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered outside the gate.** He adapts what was prefigured in the New Testament to the figure of the Old Testament, so that there might be agreement between them. Hence he says, Wherefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered outside the gate. This is clear.

748. – Then when he says, **Therefore let us go forth to him**, he draws two conclusions. In regard to the first he says: Therefore, we have said that we have an altar outside the camp. Hence, we must do two things: namely, go to it and sacrifice upon it.

749. – He tells how to go when he says that Jesus Christ suffered and bore the reproach of His passion outside the gate; therefore, **let us go forth to him outside the camp**, i.e., outside the general community

of carnal things, or outside the observances of the Law, or outside the senses of the body, **bearing abuse for him**, i.e., for Christ, i.e., the signs of Christ's passion by which Christ became a disgrace among men and offscouring of people: 'My heart has expected reproach and misery' (Ps. 68:21). Or **bearing abuse for him**, i.e., let us reject the ceremonies of the Law, now that that truth has come, on account of which we are a reproach among the Jews, i.e., on account of the signs of penance, which are reproved by carnal men: 'Esteeming the reproach greater riches than the treasures of the Egyptians' (Heb. 11:26). For just as Christ was accused of undermining the Law, so the apostles were reproached for preaching that the ceremonies of the Law should not be observed: 'And I brethren, if I yet preach the circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution' (Gal. 5:11).

750. – He adds the reason when he says: **For here we have no lasting city, but we seek one that is to come**. For a man willingly remains in his own place. For our end is not in the things of the Law or in temporal things: 'Our end is Christ unto the salvation of all who believe' (Rom. 10:4). Therefore, we have not here a lasting city, but where Christ is. Therefore, let us go to Him: 'If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God' (Col. 3:1); 'Look upon Sion, the city of our solemnity' (Is. 33:20); 'He looked for a city that has foundations; whose builder and maker is God' (supra 11:10). They also seek a better city, i.e., the heavenly one. For we strive to be transferred to it as to our place and altar. Therefore, let us go to it.

751. – Then when he says, **By him them let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God**, he presents the second conclusion, namely, that we should sacrifice upon the altar and offer certain kinds of sacrifice. For there are two kinds of sacrifice that we should offer upon Christ's altar, namely, devotion to God and mercy towards our neighbor.

752. – In regard to the first he says that the sacrifices of the Law are not to be offered: 'Sacrifice and oblation you did not desire' (Ps. 59:7); therefore, by him, i.e., by Christ, let us offer the sacrifice of praise: 'A sacrifice of praise will honor me' (Ps. 49:25). But that sacrifice of praise is called the fruit of our lips, i.e., confession with the mouth. For God is praised better by the mouth than by the killing of animals; hence he says, **the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name**, for this is necessary: 'With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation' (Rom. 10:10); 'We will render the calves of our lips' (Hos 14:3); 'I created the fruit of the lips' (Is. 57:19). But this sacrifice should be offered always, i.e., continually, as there was a continual sacrifice during the Law, as it says in Numbers (chap. 28): 'I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall be always in my mouth' (Ps. 33:2).

753. – He mentions another sacrifice, when he says, **Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have**. As if to say: You formerly performed works of mercy; but now at least with the heart, if you cannot in deed. Therefore, he says, **Do not neglect to do good**, be liberal, in regard to the things you give: 'In doing good, let us not fail' (Gal. 6:9); 'Do good to the humble, and give not to the ungodly' (Sir. 12:6).

Do not forget **to share what you have**, i.e., the things you have saved: ‘All they that believed were together, and had all things in common’ (Ac. 2:44); ‘Communicating to the necessities of the saints’ (Rom. 12:13). Or **share**, namely, by charity, through which all things are common.

754. – But why should we share that double benefit is shown when he says: **for such sacrifices are pleasing to God**, i.e., we can merit God by such sacrifices: ‘I am your protector and your reward exceeding great’ (Gen. 15:1); ‘Then you shall accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations and whole burnt offerings’ (Ps. 50:21); ‘They shall worship him with sacrifices and offerings; and they shall make vows to the Lord and perform them’ (Is. 19:21).

13-3

Heb. 13:17-25

¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you. ¹⁸Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. ¹⁹I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. ²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ²²I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³You should understand that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. ²⁴Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵Grace be with all of you. Amen.

755. – After showing them how to act in regard to their dead prelates, namely, by continuing in their teachings, the Apostle now shows how to act toward living prelates: first, how to act in regard to the others; secondly, in regard to Paul himself (v. 18).

756. – He says, therefore, **Obey your leaders** [prelates]. Here it should be noted that there are two things we owe our prelates, namely, obedience to their precepts; hence, he says, obey: ‘Obedience is better than victims’ (1 Sam 15:22), and reverence, so that we honor them as fathers and subject ourselves to their discipline. Therefore, he says, **and be subject to them**: ‘Be subject to every human creature’ (1 Pt 2:13); ‘He that resists the power, resists God’s ordinance’ (Rom. 13:2).

757. – He states the reason for subjecting themselves when he says, **for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give an account**. For the reason why we should obey and subject ourselves to our prelates is that the labor lies upon them and danger threatens them. Hence, in regard to the labor of anxiety which lies on them in ruling their subjects he says that they keep watch, i.e., are perfectly vigilant: ‘He that rules, with carefulness’ (Rom. 12:8). For the duty imposed on prelates is to watch over the flock entrusted to them; hence, it says in Luke (2:8): ‘There were shepherds,’ by which prelates are designated, ‘watching and keeping the night watches over their flocks,’ because while men sleep, the enemy comes and oversows cockle among the wheat (Mt. 13:25).

758. – As to the danger threatening them he says, **as men who will have to give an account**. For this is the greatest danger, that a man must render an account for the deeds of others, even though he is not sufficient for his own: ‘Keep this man: and if he shall slip away, your life shall be for his life’ (1 Kg

20:39). For prelates will render an account of those committed to them, when on the day of judgement, they will be asked: ‘Where is the flock that is given you, your beautiful cattle? What will you say in your heart? For you taught them against you (by saying good things are doing evil) you instructed them against your head by your bad example’ (Jer. 13:20); ‘Prelates should know that they are worthy of as many deaths as the many examples of damnation they pass on’ (Gregory); ‘My son, if you be surety for your friend, you have engaged fast your hand to a stranger. You are ensnared with the words of your mouth and caught with your own words. Do, therefore, my son, what I say and deliver yourself, because you are fallen into the hands of your neighbor. Run about, make haste, stir up your friend: (Pr. 6:1). For a prelate obliges himself to Christ for his subjects by his hand, (i.e., by the example of good works) and by his mouth (i.e., by preaching). But Christ is called a stranger, as Bernard says, because ‘He is a friend during the espousals, but a stranger in requiring an account.

759. – But it seems that a person must render an account for himself only: ‘All of us must be manifested before the tribunal of Christ, that everyone may receive the proper things of the body’ (2 Cor. 5:10). I answer that everyone will give an account mainly for his own deeds, but he will give an account for others to the extent that his acts pertain to others. But the acts of prelates pertain to others according to Ezekiel (3:17); ‘Son of man, I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel; and you shall hear the word from out of my mouth and shall tell it to them.’ Then he continues that if the prelate, who is understood by the name of the watchman, has not told it to the wicked, the wicked man will, of course, die in his sin, but his blood will be required at the hand of the watchman.

760. – Therefore, if he watches, as being to render an account for us, we should do what lies in our power, namely, obey and not rebel. **Let them do this joyfully and not sadly**, i.e., that they undergo danger and labor for us with joy and not with grief, because a good prelate gets much joy when he sees his subjects acting well: for then his work is not in vain: ‘I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in truth’ (1 Jn. 3:4); ‘Therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, and most desired, my joy and my crown: so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved’ (Phil 4:1). For they groan in your rebellion: ‘My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you’ (Gal. 4:19); ‘Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes?’ (Jer. 9:1). They also groan with pity, when on account of your rebellion they do not received the fruit of their labors, which is the fruit of eternal inheritance: ‘Behold, they that see shall cry without, the angels of peace shall weep bitterly’ (Is. 33:7).

761. – He adds the reason why we should obey them, **for that would be of no advantage to you**, that they should groan for us because of our rebellion, for God will take revenge for them. ‘They provoked to wrath and afflicted the spirit of the Holy One. And he was turned to be their enemy: and he fought against them’ (Is. 63:10).

But note that he says, **it is of no advantage [expedient] to you**, and not ‘it is not expedient to them.’ For to groan over the sins of their subjects is expedient for prelates. This is the way Samuel wept over Saul’s rejection (1 Sam. 15:35).

762. – Then he says, **pray for us**. Thus does the Apostle tell them how they should act in regard to him: for he asks that they pray for him. The same is had in Romans (15:30): ‘I beseech you, therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ and by the charity of the Holy Spirit, that you help me in your prayers for me to God,’ because, as a Gloss says: ‘It is impossible,’ i.e., very difficult, ‘for the prayers of many not to be heard’; ‘If two of you shall consent upon the earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father in Heaven’ (Mt. 18:19). Therefore, in asking that they pray for him the Apostle, who was certain that he was acceptable to God, was striking at the pride of those who scorned asking prayers of others, as a Gloss says.

763. – He gives the reason for this request when he says, **we are sure that we have a clear conscience**. This can be taken in two ways: first, in relation to those whose prayers he is asking, because, since the Apostle did not preach to the Jews but only to the Gentiles, it does not seem that he was acceptable to them. Hence, they could excuse themselves from granting his request. Therefore he says, as though excusing himself, that he is not aware of anything but seeking their good; hence, he says, **we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things**. In this we are given to understand that he intends to help them as much as he is able. But because a good conscience is from God alone, he attributes it to the confidence he has in God. Or it can be referred to the Apostle himself, because, since he would not preach to the Jews, he did not seem worthy of their prayers: for the Lord would not hear them, since he seemed to be an enemy of their faith, as it says in Jeremiah (7:16): ‘Do not pray for this people, not take to you praise and supplication for them: and do not withstand me: for I will not hear you.’ Therefore, the Apostle removes this, saying: **Pray for us**, because we have no consciousness of any sin or evil deed, but we are sure that we have a clear conscience. He does not say, ‘I am certain,’ because who understands sins? ‘A man does not know whether he is worthy of love or hatred’ (Ec. 9:1); ‘I am not conscious of anything, but I am not thereby justified’ (1 Cor. 4:4). Therefore, **we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things**, therefore your prayers should benefit me.

764. – Then (v. 19) he gives another reason why they should pray for him, namely, because this will benefit them. Therefore, **I urge you the more earnestly to do this**, i.e., to pray, because it will profit you: ‘I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual grace’ (Rom. 1:11). But the Apostle who thus has recourse to prayer for all his deeds, suggests to us that all his ways and deeds were ordained by him according to God’s plan: ‘The clouds spread their light, which go round about, whithersoever the will

of him that governs them shall lead them' (Jb. 37:11). For by the clouds are understood preachers and apostles: 'Who are these that fly as clouds?' (Is. 60:8).

765. – Then (v. 20) the Apostle prays for them. First, he prays; secondly, he excuses himself by asking something of them (v. 22).

766. – In regard to the first he describes the One Whom he seeks, saying **the God peace**. For God's proper effect is to make peace, because 'he is not a God of dissension but of peace' (1 Cor. 14:33) and 'have peace: and the God of peace and love shall be with you' (2 Cor. 13:11). For peace is nothing more than unity of affections, which God alone can make one, because hearts are united by charity, which is from God alone. For God knows how to gather and unite, because God is love, which is the bond of perfection. Hence, 'he makes men of one manner to dwell in a house' (Ps. 67:7). For man made peace between himself and God through the ministry of Christ.

767. – Hence, he says, **who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep**. But sometimes Christ is said to have been raised up by the Father's power: 'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus Christ from the dead' (Rom. 8:11); and sometimes He is said to have raised Himself: 'I have slept and taken my rest: and I have risen up' (Ps. 3:6). But these statements are not contrary, because He rose by God's power, which is one in the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, he brought him again from the dead, i.e., from the tomb, which is the place of the dead: 'As Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also shall walk in the newness of life' (Rom. 6:4). But Christ is called the great shepherd of the sheep, i.e., of the faithful and the humble: 'I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me' (Jn. 10:14); for the sheep are they who obey God: 'And my sheep hear my voice' (Jn. 10:27). But he calls him the great shepherd, because all others are His vicars, for He feeds His own sheep, but the others feed Christ's sheep: 'Feed my sheep' (Jn. 21:17); 'When the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory' (1 Pt 5:4).

768. – He brought Him out **by the blood of the eternal covenant**, i.e., in virtue of the blood of Christ by Whom is confirmed the New Covenant, in which eternal things are promised, but not in the Old. For Christ calls His blood the blood of the New Covenant; but the Apostle says, **of the everlasting covenant**. Therefore, both are mentioned in the words of the consecration of the Blood. But Christ by His passion merited the glory of His resurrection for Himself and for us; hence, he says, **who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus. . . by the blood of the eternal covenant**: 'He humbled himself, being made obedient unto death' (Phil 2:8); 'By the blood of your testament you have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water' (Zech 9:11).

769. – Then he adds his petition when he says, **May he equip [fit] you with everything good**. For the human will, since it is the inclination of reason, is the principle of human acts, as heaviness is the principle of downward movement of heavy bodies; hence it is related to the acts of human reason as a natural inclination to natural acts. But a natural thing is said to be fit for that to which it has an inclination. So, too, man, when he has the will to do good, is said to be fit for it. God, too, when He inserts a good will in a man, fits him, i.e., makes him fit. Therefore, he says, **May God fit you with every good that you may do his will**, i.e., make you will every good: ‘The desire of the just is every good’ (Pr. 2:3). For this is God’s will, namely, what God wills us to will; otherwise, our will is not good. But the will of God is our good: ‘This is the will of God, your sanctification’ (1 Th. 4:3); ‘That you may prove what is the good and acceptable and the perfect will of God’ (Rom. 12:2).

770. – Now a man is made fit for doing well in two ways: In one way, by working outwardly; this is the way one man fits another, by persuading or threatening; in another way, by manifesting something inwardly; and this is the way that God alone fits a will, because He alone can change it: ‘The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord; whithersoever he will he will incline it’ (Pr. 21:1). Hence, he says, **working in you**: ‘It is God who works in us both to will and to accomplish’ (Phil 2:13). But what will He do? **That which is pleasing in his sight**, i.e., He will make you will what pleases Him. But this is faith and meekness and fear of the Lord: ‘Faith and meekness are agreeable to him’ (Sir. 1:34); ‘The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him’ (Ps. 146:11). But all these are obtained **through Jesus Christ**, for nothing is obtained from the Father except through the Son: ‘If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you’ (Jn. 16:25); ‘By whom he has given us most great and precious promises’ (2 Pt. 1:4); ‘By whom we have access by faith unto grace’ (Rom. 5:2). **To whom**, namely, Christ, **is glory forever and ever. Amen**, i.e., eternal glory: ‘To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.’ (1 Tim. 1:17). For this glory is owed him, inasmuch as He is God.

771. – Then (v. 22) he adds a petition in which he excuses himself; then he concludes the epistle. In regard to the first he does three things: first, he gives his excuse; secondly, he recommends the messenger through whom he writes (v. 23); thirdly, he sends several greetings (v. 24).

772. – He says, therefore, in regard to the first: **I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation** [consolation], i.e., patiently bear with the words of this epistle, in which, even though I have rebuked some of you, it is all for your consolation: ‘What things soever are written, are written for our consolation’ (Rom. 15:4). Then he shows why they should bear with it patiently, when he says, **for I have written to you briefly**. This is true in regard to the mysteries contained in it; for almost all the mysteries

of the New Testament are contained in this epistle. But short talks are most welcome; because if they are good, they will be heard eagerly. If they are bad, they are a little boring: ‘Let your words be few’ (Ec 5:1).

773. – Then he recommends the one through whom he writes, saying, **You should understand that our brother Timothy has been released**, namely, from prison, where he was with the Apostle. Or released by me to preach and come to you, both because he had been circumcised (Ac. 16:3) and because, **with whom I will see you, if he comes soon**. In this he shows the love he had for them. He also shows this because, even though he did not visit them, he was suffering in Rome and was uncertain whether he would be set at liberty for a while.

774. – Then he gives the greeting: first, he asks them to greet the others, saying, **Greet all you prelates**, i.e., the apostles still living, **and all the saints**, namely, the other disciples. But he does not write to them, because his intention was to write only against the observances of the Law. Therefore, because this epistle is instructive, it was not his intention to instruct the apostles, who preceded him in the faith. Secondly, he salutes them on the part of the others, saying, **The brethren from Italy send you greetings**. For he wrote the epistle from Rome.

775. – Then he concludes in his accustomed manner, as though sealing it with a personal greeting: **Grace be with all of you. Amen**, i.e., the remission of sins and any other of God’s gifts, which are obtained through the grace of God, be firmly with all of you. The Amen is a confirmation of everything.